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SOUTHERN DECORATIVE ARTS

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THE MUSEUM OF EARLY SOUTHERN DECORATIVE ARTS

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# Such Luxuries as Sofas

## An Introduction to North Carolina Moravian Upholstered Furniture

JOHANNA M. BROWN

**S**OUTH CAROLINA CONGRESSMAN William Loughton Smith recorded the following about the Moravians in Salem, North Carolina, in his 1790 travel journal:

After traveling through the woods for many days, the sight of this little settlement of Moravians is highly curious and interesting. Between 200 and 300 persons of this sect here assembled live in brotherly love and set a laudable example of industry, unfortunately too little observed and followed in this part of the country. Every man follows some occupation; every woman is engaged in some feminine work; a tanner, shoemaker, potter, saddler, tinner, brewer, distiller, etc. is here seen at work; from their labors they not only supply themselves but the country all around them. The first view of the town is romantic, just as it breaks upon you through the woods; it is pleasantly seated on a rising ground, and is surrounded by beautiful meadows, well-cultivated fields, and shady woods. The antique appearance of the houses, built in the German style, and the trees among which they are placed have a singular and pleasing effect; the whole resembles a beautiful village. . . .<sup>1</sup>

It seems somehow fitting that such an industrious group of settlers—isolated though they were in many ways in the heart of the

Backcountry—should indulge occasionally in the luxury of upholstered furniture.

Research materials gathered by the MESDA research program have shown that no place else in the Backcountry do we find widespread evidence of upholstered furniture as early as we see it in the Moravian settlements in North Carolina. Old Salem is fortunate to have both artifact and documentary evidence for upholstered furniture made and used by Moravians living in North Carolina in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

What were the factors that allowed Moravians to indulge in upholstered furniture? Was upholstered furniture considered an indulgence? What forms of upholstered furniture did the North Carolina Moravians have? What upholstered furniture might they have seen and been influenced by? What kind of upholstery materials did they use? Who were the upholsterers? Who were the consumers of upholstered furniture? These are all questions that the documentary and material evidence address in some fashion.

The Moravians who founded the communities in North Carolina traced their history to the Bohemian martyr Jan Hus who burned at the stake in 1415 for his unrelenting opposition to the corruptions of the Roman Catholic Church. The death of Jan Hus set off a series of religious wars that disrupted middle Europe for decades.

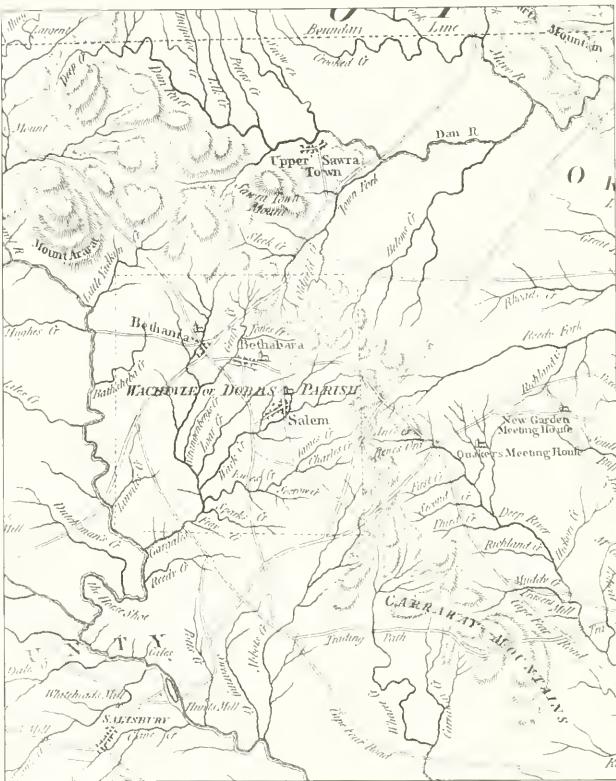
Despite persecution lasting for centuries and resulting in exile for Hus's followers in the seventeenth century, a small group of Hussites persevered in their beliefs and eventually found refuge on the Saxon estate of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf in 1722. Here they founded a religious community called Herrnhut and watched over the re-birth of the Unity of the Brethren, or as we refer to it today, the Moravian Church. It was in Herrnhut that the Moravians developed many of the unique practices and customs that they brought with them when they immigrated to the American colonies to establish congregation towns. The Moravians' spiritual beliefs were grounded in the principles of pietism and the importance of

each church member's personal experience with the Savior. The Unity (or the church) maintained tight control over the material and spiritual affairs of the congregation. If a brother or sister could not live within the parameters set by the church, he or she was encouraged to leave.

Little more than a decade after the founding of Herrnhut, the Moravians began sending colonists to America. The first settlement founded in Georgia in 1735 failed, but the second, founded in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1740–1741 did very well, and it was not long before the Pennsylvania Brethren had founded two additional communities, Nazareth and Lititz. The Moravians living in Pennsylvania quickly developed a reputation as responsible, industrious colonists. It was this reputation that encouraged John Carteret, the Earl of Granville and a Proprietor of the Royal Province of North Carolina, to welcome the Moravians' interest in founding a settlement in North Carolina. The Englishman sold them a 100,000-acre tract of land in Piedmont North Carolina, in 1752, which the Moravians called "Die Wachau" after Zinzendorf's Austrian ancestral estate.<sup>2</sup> See the map in *figure 1*.

The master plan for the North Carolina settlement included the eventual establishment of a central industrial town or trade center in Wachovia, but the first Moravian settlers arriving in Wachovia in 1753 were more concerned with survival. The Moravians founded their first North Carolina settlement near an abandoned cabin in the northwest corner of the Wachovia tract. The name they chose for their new settlement, Bethabara, meaning "House of Passage," implied their understanding that the first settlement was but a stepping stone to the founding of the central congregation town. Progress was slow in the Backcountry, however, and the "House of Passage" actually remained the central town for nearly twenty years. In the meantime, a second small village, Bethania, was founded in 1759 just a few miles away. It was not until 1765 that the need for the central town was brought to the forefront once again and the site for the community was chosen. Construction of the town of Salem

1. The Wachovia Tract  
(detail of a larger map  
of North and South  
Carolina) by Henry  
Mouzon, et al.; ink  
on paper; London,  
England; 1775, HOA 40",  
WOA 57½". MRS-2569,  
*Old Salem Collection*  
Acc. 3024.3.



was begun in 1766. By April 1772 much of the town of Salem was completed and 120 people moved from Bethabara to Salem, leaving behind a small farming community.

For the next several decades Salem functioned as a congregation town in which the Church was central to all spiritual, secular, and economic activities. Although church members owned their own houses and trade shops, the Church owned the land and leased lots

to church members. The Church also owned and operated the major businesses and industrial pursuits of the community, including the tavern, store, tannery, pottery, and mill.<sup>3</sup>

While the tightly controlled environment of the church-governed North Carolina Moravian communities certainly placed many restrictions on the residents, it also provided a safety net for craftsmen who might have found it difficult to make it on their own. The Church regulated competition among those practicing the various trades and supported these tradesmen by not only purchasing their goods, but also by promoting trade outside of Salem. It's clear from William Loughton Smith's remarks that he considered the Moravian community of Salem to be somewhat of an anomaly in the Back-country in that the residents seemed to have a much higher standard of living than many of their neighbors. In addition to observing that the Moravians in Salem "set a laudable example of industry too little observed and followed in this country," Smith noted that the death rate in Salem between 1772 and 1791 "is only three per annum, a surprising proof of the good effects of industry, sobriety, temperance, and a good situation."<sup>4</sup> William D. Martin, an outsider who visited Salem in 1809, noted not only the industry of the residents, but also commented on the houses in the community which he considered to be "uncommonly well-constructed."<sup>5</sup> The quality of life enjoyed by the Moravians was due in part at least to the socially and economically controlled environment in which they lived.

Conversely, the North Carolina Moravians' quality of life was also influenced by the extent to which they exposed themselves to outside influences. Many of the residents of the North Carolina Moravian communities frequently traveled to large urban centers such as Charleston, South Carolina, Petersburg, Virginia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in pursuit of trade. Furthermore, many Moravians traveled between the North Carolina and Pennsylvania Moravian communities, passing through larger cities both for business and pleasure. Naturally, this contact increased the North Carolina Moravians' awareness of fashionable goods of all kinds, including furniture, by exposing them to current fashions and styles. In spite of the

fact that the North Carolina Moravians clung to Baroque stylistic elements and construction methods in furniture until the end of the eighteenth century and even into the early nineteenth century as did some other German craftsmen working in America,<sup>6</sup> the abundance of North Carolina Moravian upholstered furniture that can be documented and the materials the North Carolina Moravians chose for furniture upholstery suggest that they understood what was fashionable in upholstered furniture.

In a letter regarding his transfer from Salem to Bethlehem in 1821, Salem administrator Lewis David deSchweinitz wrote the following:

Naturally we shall not take our furniture with us. We hope to find the most necessary items there, since we shall suffer a financial loss at any rate. Will you be so kind to inform brother Schultz that he will find the necessary furniture [and] kitchen implements here . . . since I have bought all of this for a long time [from] the account of the Administration. . . . With regard to the furniture I had the rule to buy everything useful and necessary [from the] Administration account, and everything pertaining to vanity or decoration at my own expense. Thus, the above mentioned financial loss is merely punishment, well-earned, for the enjoyment of such luxuries as sofas, mahogany tables, chairs serving only decorative purposes, mirrors, vanity curtains with tassels, etc., likewise bedsteads, cradles with everything pertaining to them, carpets of all shape and color. . . .<sup>7</sup>

That deSchweinitz mentions upholstered furniture at all is worthy of note. Even in the 1820s, upholstered furniture does not seem to have been common in the Backcountry. Clearly, deSchweinitz recognized that his sofa was a luxury not found in every household. Even for the more urban neighbors of Backcountry Moravians, upholstered furniture was generally a luxury enjoyed by only the wealthiest in the eighteenth century and not widely owned even by the middle class until well into the nineteenth century.

Indeed, although Moravians seem to have had more upholstered furniture than their Backcountry neighbors, certainly in the eight-

teenth century and perhaps well into the nineteenth century, still not every Moravian household had an upholstered settee or armchair.

Many factors contributed to the Moravians awareness of fashionable upholstered furnishings and their desire to have them. In addition to their exposure to goods in large urban areas in America as mentioned earlier, the North Carolina Moravian craftsmen were influenced by their European counterparts. When they established the North Carolina communities, the Moravian leaders chose the founders of these communities with care, making sure that these individuals had the trades essential to create working communities. While many of the craftsmen came to North Carolina from the Pennsylvania communities in the eighteenth century, many were recent immigrants to America from the European communities and others came directly from Europe to live in the North Carolina settlements. The Moravians founding the American settlements came for the most part from well-educated, middle-class families who, no doubt, brought ideas about fashionable furniture forms and styles with them. Constant communication between the American and European Moravian communities throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and continued immigration of European Moravians to the American communities ensured that the transference of ideas about furniture styles and forms continued as well.

The Moravians settling in the North Carolina Backcountry in the mid-eighteenth century brought a tradition of upholstered furniture with them from Europe via Bethlehem. The greater-than-usual space between the splat and seat of the early Bethlehem armchair shown in *figure 2* suggests that the chair at one time had a squab or cushion sitting upon the woven seat. Is that upholstery? Perhaps only in the loosest sense, but the upholstered leather easy chair from Bethlehem pictured in *figure 3* certainly qualifies in the traditional sense of the term. Although the current leather upholstery is a replacement, the chair was probably originally upholstered in a similar material. Both pieces were acquired in the North during the early

2. (*right*) Armchair, maker unknown; walnut with split oak seat; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; 1740–60. HOA 47"; WOA 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; DOA 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". MRF 1262, *Old Salem Collection Acc. 698.*



3. (*far right*) Easy chair, maker unknown; walnut, leather, brass, foundation materials unidentified; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; 1780–1800. HOA 51 $\frac{1}{2}$ "; WOA 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ "; DOA 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". MRF 1261, *Old Salem Collection Acc. 480.13.*



years of collecting for Old Salem. These chairs are the kinds of pieces that Moravians living in North Carolina had seen in Pennsylvania or might have even brought with them when they settled in North Carolina.

Traditionally, upholsterers in urban areas were often hired to provide all of the textile components of a room including window treatments and carpets. Many also advertised that they were paper-hangers or combined the upholstery trade with cabinetmaking. MESDA's catalog of artisans includes only eighteen upholsterers in the Backcountry in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Several of these advertised that they made hair mattresses, bed and window curtains, and fitted carpets or hung wallpaper in

addition to upholstering furniture.<sup>8</sup> Some were also saddlers and one advertised that he trimmed coaches. Perhaps because none of the craftsmen associated with upholstery in Salem considered the skill to be his primary craft or trade, none of the seven North Carolina Moravian craftsmen documented as having been involved in upholstery in Salem ca. 1800 to 1850 are included among the upholsterers listed in the MESDA catalog. Clearly, upholsterers were rare in the Backcountry and the fact that Salem had at least seven craftsmen associated with upholstery within a fifty-year period is especially noteworthy.

In his 1846 *Panorama of Trades and Professions*, Edward Hazen discusses the cabinetmaker and upholsterer together in one chapter, almost dismissing the actual tasks carried out by the upholsterer in this way:

We have not space for a particular description of the manner in which any of the particular operations of the upholsterer are performed; nor is this necessary, since the work itself, in almost every specimen of it, affords obvious indications of the manner of its execution.<sup>9</sup>

The art and mystery of upholstery seems to have been of little consequence to Edward Hazen, and the North Carolina Moravian Church records do not elaborate on specific techniques used by those upholstering furniture. The furniture itself does indeed "afford obvious indications of the manner of [upholstery] execution." While the Moravians apparently did not have craftsmen who focused solely on upholstery, artifact and documentary evidence exists to suggest the materials the Moravians used when upholstering furniture, the kinds of upholstered furniture they had, and how the Moravians used the upholstered furniture that they made and owned.

Leather was a common covering for early North Carolina Moravian upholstered furniture. It seems logical for this durable material to have been a popular and practical choice given the availability of leather from Salem's red tannery operated as one of the Church industries.<sup>10</sup> Most of the early tannery records are in German, making it difficult to search for evidence of upholstery leather among the in-



4. Windsor stool, maker unknown; poplar, maple, hickory, paint, modern upholstery materials; Salem, North Carolina; ca. 1780. HOA 29½"; DOA 25½"; DIA of seat 25½". *MRFS-1168*, Old Salem Collection Acc. 783.

ventories without a translator. The 1814 Tannery inventory is in English, but although the inventory lists some specific-use materials such as "saddle [*sic*] leather," "harness leather," and "Soal [*sic*] leather," the listing does not include any terminology that would lead one to believe any of the stock at the time was intended specifically for furniture upholstery.<sup>11</sup> It is not until the late 1830s that the inventories are routinely recorded in English. The first English reference to leather specifically for furniture upholstery appears to be an entry on the 1839 inventory of stock on hand that includes "Calf-seating" among the other items listed as "Finished Leather."<sup>12</sup>

The leather upholstered Windsor stool ca. 1780 illustrated in figure 4 is an early example of upholstered furniture owned by the Salem congregation. In fact, the congregation marked it as belonging to them with a brand of the letters "GD," an abbreviation for Gemein Diacony. Other pieces with histories of Church ownership that bear the "GD" mark now in the Old Salem collection include a North Carolina Moravian Windsor chair and the remnant of a wooden rake.

The translation of the "Inventory of What the Single Brother's House Took Over from the Diacony on January 1, 1770. The Saddler's Trade" includes some very interesting materials related to upholstery. Among the saddles and tools for making saddles are listed: seven yards "Red Plush," three yards "Blue Plush," five yards "Green Plush," "Blue Fringe," and assorted cord and bindings.<sup>13</sup> The 1771 inventory of



5. *A Gentleman at Breakfast*, attributed to Henry Walton, 1775–80, oil on canvas, H.O.A. 25"; W.O.A. 30 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Courtesy of the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio; Acc. 1956.77.

the saddler's trade included fourteen yards fringe, twenty yards narrow binding, and a "supply of hair."<sup>14</sup> These materials, particularly the various colors of plush and fringe, could have been used either for furniture upholstery or carriage upholstery.

Other early references to upholstery materials do not mention who might have completed any associated upholstery work. The 1784 inventory of sundry supplies in the Single Brothers' House included twenty-five yards of "Furniture,"<sup>15</sup> the 1785 inventory lists thirty yards "Furniture,"<sup>16</sup> and the 1786 inventory included twenty-nine yards "fine check" with  $7\frac{1}{2}$  yards "furniture" listed just below it.<sup>17</sup> All of these references refer to the type of fabric used to make

loose covers such as the one on the chair in the eighteenth-century interior shown in *figure 5*, cases for cushions, bed hangings, or curtains. Other evidence that the North Carolina Moravians may have continued to use loose covers or slipcovers into the nineteenth century includes an 1825 entry in the Salem Diacony Journal that lists \$0.50 paid for making a "pillow & bag for a chair."<sup>18</sup> Receipts from the 1830s and 1840s include numerous charges for furniture calicos, furniture prints, and furniture check.<sup>19</sup>

A 1793 memorandum found among letters to Gottfried Haga, a forwarding agent in Philadelphia, includes a large list of things presumably to be sent from Philadelphia including "Jac. Meyer cloth for a sorfat [sic] 3 yd if yd wide & trimmings."<sup>20</sup> By this time, Jacob Meyer, once the tavern keeper, was acting as administrator of the Single Sisters. It's not clear from the listing, however, whether the sofa was one Brother Meyer owned himself or one that he was having recovered for the Single Sisters. A later entry on the same memorandum lists "Cloth for Koffler for a sorfat."<sup>21</sup> Adam Koffler moved from Bethabara to Salem in 1772. He seems to have done a variety of things through the years to earn a living including weaving, clock repair, silversmithing, and serving as a spokesman to strangers visiting Salem. In 1793, he was also working as the town nightwatchman.<sup>22</sup> It is unclear whether Meyer and Koffler planned to undertake the upholstery of their respective sofas themselves. The memorandum is simply evidence that each was acquiring materials intended for the upholstery of a sofa.

Indeed, very early in the records we find evidence of the town saddler taking responsibility for upholstering furniture. On 30 April 1801, the Salem Diacony Journal records payment "for bolstering a chair by Charles Holder."<sup>23</sup> The charge was one pound four shillings. Charles Holder arrived from Pennsylvania in Salem in 1766 at the age of 22 to "begin the saddler's trade."<sup>24</sup> He had a long but rocky career as the saddler, often being chastised by the church for not working hard enough and not producing enough saddles. In the rare times when he did produce, he was criticized for making saddles of poor quality.<sup>25</sup> In 1789, the church records note that in response to

criticism of his work, Charles Holder “is always complaining about the saddle trees, though it is certain that the main fault lies with his upholstery.”<sup>26</sup> It is interesting then that the church should have Holder upholster a chair for them. The upholstery of the chair did come at a time when Holder was complaining of not having enough work to do.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the church was trying to help the debt-ridden saddler stay afloat. Or perhaps in spite of his less-than-perfect upholstery technique, Holder as the saddler—a trade closely related to furniture upholstery—was the only person in town trusted to undertake the upholstery of furniture.

The North Carolina Moravians were quite concerned about the proper care of the sick in the community. In communal living quarters sick individuals were often segregated from the rest of the residents. The 14 February 1793 minutes of the Helfer Conferenz<sup>28</sup> note that, “the married people need a reclining chair like the one in the Brother’s House, for the use of the sick . . .”<sup>29</sup> It may have taken quite some time for the wishes of the Helfer Conferenz to be realized, however, for it was not until 16 February 1796 that the minutes of the Aufseher Collegium, another ruling body of the church, record that “some time ago it was decided to get a warming pan and an arm-chair for the use of the sick . . . a design for the latter has already been received from Bethlehem, and it shall now be made.” The 1 March 1796 entry elaborates on the chair by adding, “the frame of the armchair shall be made of cherry-wood, which Br. Christoph Vogler will furnish.”<sup>30</sup>

The upholstered chair presented in *figures 6* and *6a* with adjustable back and leg supports is just the type of chair, and perhaps one of *the* chairs to which the previous passages refer. This particular chair has a history of ownership by the Single Brothers’ Diacony. The fact that it is constructed of walnut rather than the cherry that was to be used for the chair discussed in 1796 provides additional evidence that it may have been the sick chair used by the Single Brothers that the Helfer Conferenz wanted to duplicate.

Although this chair looks as though it could have been made ca.



6. Sick chair, maker unknown; walnut, leather, horsehair, wool, linen, brass, and iron; Salem, North Carolina; 1775–90. HOA 53"; 25½"; seat height 19". MRF S-575, *Old Salem Collection Acc.* C-73.

1760 with its baroque vasiform baluster turnings, it likely dates 1775–90 and is an excellent example of the Moravians' tendency toward retention of baroque style. The footrest has two possible settings and the back is equipped with ratcheted arms that allow it to recline at eleven different angles. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was not uncommon to do surgery while a patient was sitting, and the adjustable nature of the chair provided the doctor

with needed flexibility to position the patient at the proper angle for various procedures. No doubt the chair was also adjusted to make its ailing occupant more comfortable. Brass knobs on the sides of the top portion of the chair probably held a cover in place to protect the leather upholstery. While the seat upholstery seems to be second generation, remaining upholstery elsewhere on the chair appears to be original. Damage to the leather show cover reveals that beneath the leather is a linen skimmer over curled horsehair stuffing.

The Moravians' concern for separating the sick from the healthy members of the community in order to prevent or at least restrict the spread of disease continued into the nineteenth century as well. The 1828 inventory of the Boys' School sick room includes one easy chair valued at \$5.00.<sup>31</sup> The chair presented in *figure 7* is one known to have been used by the Pennsylvania Moravians in one of the sick rooms in Bethlehem at the end of the eighteenth century. Perhaps this is the type of easy chair that was in the Boys' School sick room. The value of the chair and the description of the chair as an easy



6a. Sick chair presented in *figure 6* in reclined position.



7. Armchair, maker unknown; ash or hickory with modern upholstery materials; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; 1788. HOA 43 $\frac{3}{4}$ ; WOA 25 $\frac{7}{8}$ ; DOA 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ . MRF S-12065. Courtesy of the Moravian Museum of Bethlehem, a member institution of Historic Bethlehem Partnership, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

chair seem to imply a simpler version of a sick chair than the adjustable sick chair discussed earlier.<sup>32</sup>

An 1812 list of furniture belonging to the Salem diacony included two upholstered chairs in the warden's or trustee's house.<sup>33</sup> We know little about the chairs beyond that they were covered in something and that one was described as "small" and the other was listed as having once belonged to a brother named Heinze.<sup>34</sup> They could have been side chairs such as the late baroque example shown in figure 8,

which was originally used in the Friedburg congregation just a few miles from Salem. Perhaps they were more like the later cherry side chair shown in *figure 9* that has a history of early usage in the Home Moravian Church in Salem and more recently at Trinity Moravian Church before its return to Salem. An interesting mixture of styles, the chair in *figure 9* retains a baroque crest rail and a late rococo pierced splat all on neoclassical tapering legs. The leather upholstery on this chair is original as a damaged corner shows that there is only



8. Side chair, maker unknown; walnut, leather, brass, foundation materials unidentified; Salem, North Carolina; 1770–80. HOA 47 $\frac{3}{4}$ "; WOA 19 $\frac{7}{8}$ "; Seat height 20". MRF S-5734. Private collection.

9. Side chair, maker unknown; cherry, leather, linen, curled horseshair, grass, brass; Salem, North Carolina; 1790–1810. HOA 43 $\frac{5}{8}$ "; WOA 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". MRF S-7801, Old Salem Collection Acc. C-326.

one set of tack holes on the rail. Beneath the leather is a linen skimmer. The seat is supported by 2 1/4-inch webbing and linen sacking material that appears to match the skimmer. The stuffing materials are not visible on this chair, although evidence suggests that they consist of grass and curled horsehair. The seat is trimmed in near-continuous brass nails that are original to the chair. An entry in the Salem community store journal lists charges to Henry Herbst for 2 1/2 yards of cloth and brass nails on 9 May 1815.<sup>35</sup> While the materials could have been destined for a saddle, it is interesting to speculate that Herbst could just as easily have been purchasing materials to upholster a chair such as the example in *figure 9*.

Of course, these entries in the Inventory could be referring to a small armchair such as the example shown in *figure 10*, shown here with replaced upholstery. This chair has some interesting construction anomalies. The upholstery itself appears to be third generation. A survey of upholstered North Carolina Moravian chairs conducted by conservator Nancy Rosebrock revealed that beneath the current leather, there is evidence of at least two prior upholstery treatments. Some old 2 1/2-inch-wide webbing remains intact on the underside. Additional new webbing has been added. There have been some structural changes to this chair that remain somewhat of a mystery. One thing that is clear, however, is that, although they are currently finished as show wood, the arms have tack holes indicating that they were once upholstered. Furthermore, the smaller-than-usual “ear wings” have been altered or perhaps added.<sup>36</sup>

While leather seems to have been a common covering for Moravian upholstered chairs throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, Moravians used other fashionable upholstery materials for show covers as well. The Salem Community Store Letters Books include an 1805 letter to Gottfried Haga in Philadelphia that includes some accounting related to fabrics that may have been used for furniture upholstery. Although the majority of the letter is in German, at the end of the letter is a “Statement of Sundries” that includes various kinds of worsted, hair, and plush. The list seems to

be a statement of both what has been returned because it has not sold and what has been sold. The list of items sold includes "8 yd ribbed green hair, 11½[yards] blue worsted, and 4 [yards] red plain worsted."<sup>37</sup>

In 1816, Peter Wolle, a teacher in the Boys' School wrote, "after dinner I went to Petersen and bought 2 elegant chairs for our house, which Br. Stotz was very willing to pay for—They cost \$5.00."<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the chairs were similar to the chair in the portrait of Charles Bagge and his family shown in *figure 11*. The chair in this portrait appears to be upholstered in some kind of blue plush. Or perhaps the chairs were similar to the upholstered example presented in *figure 12*. This chair was made and indeed signed by a cabinetmaker working in Salem in the first half of the nineteenth century, Karsten Petersen. Although he was originally from Schleswig Holstein, Prussia, and apparently lived for a time in Denmark, Petersen came to Salem via Gnadau, Germany, in 1806 (Petersen's portrait is presented in *figure 13*). Karsten Petersen was one of an influx of four cabinetmakers arriving in Salem from Germany between 1806 and 1809. Shortly after his arrival, Petersen went to work as a missionary among the Creek Indians in Georgia. Upon his return to Salem in 1813, he began work as a turner and cabinetmaker in Salem. An extant account book from the Petersen shop provides evidence that most chairs sold by Petersen in the 1820s and 30s cost between \$0.30 and \$0.75 apiece. Therefore, \$5.00 for two chairs seems extravagant and implies that there was something special about



10. Armchair, maker unknown; walnut with replaced upholstery materials; Salem, North Carolina; 1790–1810. HOA 41¾"; WOA 21¾"; Seat height 15¾". MRF S-1256, Old Salem Collection Acc. C-485.

11. *Charles Bagge Family*  
by Daniel Welfare; oil on  
canvas; Salem, North  
Carolina; ca. 1832. HOA  
 $35\frac{3}{8}$ "; WOA  $43\frac{5}{8}$ ". MRF  
S-11463, Old Salem Collec-  
tion Acc. 3589.



them. The example in *figure 12* descended in the Petersen family. While the stylistic composition of the chair with its curved saber legs and scrolled crest rail is similar to late neoclassical chairs made throughout Europe and America, Peter Thornton describes a similar chair pictured in an 1813 Frankfort interior as being a "well-known German form."<sup>39</sup> The solid wooden bottom probably replaced linen sacking material and webbing, and served as support for the foundation stuffing—probably a combination of grasses, wool, and curled horsehair. One of the interesting things about this and other pieces of upholstered furniture made in the Petersen shop and in the shops of others working in Salem in this period is that certain components (in this case the back panel) are completely removable for upholstery, similar to the way a slip seat is removed from a chair. The back panel is held in place by tension created by the angle at the top of the frame for the back cushion that corresponds to an opposing angle on the chair frame.

While there are two references to sofas in Salem prior to the nineteenth century (the sofas for which Jacob Meyer and Adam Koffler purchased cloth), early references to sofas and/or settees are few, and the next reference chronologically is on the 1802 “List of the House Furnishings which belong to the [Carl Gotthold] Reichel’s future home.” Until 1841, ministers of the Salem congregation occupied a living quarters in the *Gemein Haus*, or congregation house. The Moravians periodically compiled inventories of church property in the *Gemein Haus* and other church buildings. The 1802 inventory list was compiled in preparation for the arrival of Rev. Reichel who was coming from Nazareth, Pennsylvania. Interestingly, this inventory lists a *canapé*, the French term for settee, as one piece of furniture that would be available to Reichel and his family.<sup>40</sup>

An 1811 list of furnishings that Rev. Reichel left in Salem when he returned North to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, lists a walnut frame for a *canapé*.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps by this time the upholstery was worn and in need of replacement. Or perhaps the covering for the settee had consisted of cushions such as would have been used on the example in figure 14 and the cushions were not with the sofa at the time of the inventory. Another *canapé* (or perhaps the same one) appears in the 1813 inventory of “Furnishings belonging to the present Dwelling of Jacob Van Vleck.” Jacob Van Vleck became Salem’s minister in 1813. Although many of the furnishings on the inventory of Van Vleck’s dwelling differed from those



12. Side chair by Karsten Petersen; maple and poplar, modern upholstery materials; Salem, North Carolina; 1815–25, HOA 35 $\frac{3}{8}$ "; WOA 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "; Seat height 17". MRF 5-6231, Old Salem Collection Acc. 2837.3.

13. Portrait of Karsten Petersen with two of his grandchildren from an original daguerreotype, photographer unknown; Salem, North Carolina; ca. 1850. MRF S-24651, courtesy of the Old Salem Photographic Archives.



on the list of items Reichel left behind, perhaps a sofa was a fixture in the minister's living quarters that remained in place to be used by subsequent occupants.

The earliest sofas in the Old Salem collection show strong German and Scandinavian influence. In *Authentic Décor: The Domestic Interior 1620–1920*, Peter Thornton illustrates “A middle class drawing room in Stockholm 1798” which pictures a settee very similar to early Salem sofas, complete with the type of loose cushions that no doubt completed the upholstery of a sofa such as the example in figure 14.<sup>42</sup>

Thornton also includes an illustration of “Three Copenhagen Interiors ca. 1814,” one of which includes furniture that Thornton describes as “a Danish version of French Empire.”<sup>43</sup> The straight backs, flared arms, and straight tapered legs of the sofa pictured in this room and the ones in the other two interiors are clearly similar to the Salem sofa made between 1810–30 and shown in figure 15. These

interiors also illustrate the kind of cushions that probably completed the upholstery of this piece, some of which were reproduced at the time that this sofa was reupholstered in 1998. This Salem example is also remarkably similar to a much smaller settee this author has seen in a museum in Herrnhut, Germany, in its overall shape, the slight splay of the legs, and the composition of the arm rails and supports. The largest difference between the Herrnhut sofa and the Salem example is the width: the Herrnhut example could not possibly seat more than two small adults while the Salem examples could comfortably seat three adults.

The length of the Salem sofas in this period and the form of the sofa without the back and end cushions (see figure 14) indicate that they might also have functioned as couches or daybeds when needed, similar perhaps to the way the daybed is being used in the view of a music teacher's room in Stockholm a bit later in the nineteenth century (see figure 16). Peter Thornton, in his *Authentic Decor: The Domestic Interior 1620–1920*, refers to a similar piece, shown in figure



14. Sofa, maker unknown; poplar, modern upholstery materials; Salem, North Carolina; 1800–20. LOA 81"; HOA 31½"; DOA 27½".  
MRF S-15145, Old Salem Collection Acc. S-569.



15. Sofa, maker unknown;  
walnut, poplar, and pine,  
with modern upholstery  
materials; Salem, North  
Carolina; 1810–30. LOA  
 $71\frac{1}{4}$ "; HOA  $35\frac{3}{8}$ "; DOA  
 $26\frac{1}{2}$ ". MRF S-15146, Old  
Salem Collection Acc.  
2469.12.

17 as a "sofa Bed."<sup>44</sup> In fact, Louisa Hagen, a teacher at the Salem Girls' School writes in her diary:

As soon as I was at home, they told me that S. was very sick with the fever, consequently I did not see him untill [sic] I had been there some time when he came in the room on the sofa. I pity him very much, in the midst of pain he expresses his love to me every time he sees me. . . . Miss K. has just been telling me there is a report spreading that S wanted to marry me. I am quite unconcerned as I cant [sic] help it if he does. I have never intruded myself on him I know. This evening something occurred which could give a talk. I was setting on a chair beside the sofa where he was setting, & fanned him when the door was open & one of the town kitchen girls looked in without any reserve.<sup>45</sup>

In another diary entry eight months later, Louisa writes of being unwell all day and, upon returning home, "reclining on the sofa, untill [sic] Vesper."<sup>46</sup> Clearly, at least in the Hagen household, the sofa was considered to be a comfortable place to rest by visitors and family members who were feeling poorly.

Missing from Salem sofas, of course, is the trundle base seen in many illustrations that serves as an additional sleeping surface. Salem sofas are also generally about four or five inches shorter than Salem beds and seem a little bit shorter than the sofas in these illustrations, although perspective can be difficult to judge.

An 1822 receipt in the Moravian archives includes two charges to Gottlieb Byhan, a community and church leader, by saddler Hein-



16. A music-teacher's room in Stockholm by Josabeth Sjöberg, c. 1847. Courtesy of the Stockholm City Museum, Stockholm, Sweden, Acc. E32844.

17. *A school-teacher's room in Stockholm* by Johan Gustaf Kohler, 1843. Courtesy of the Stockholm City Museum, Stockholm, Sweden, Acc. F47773.



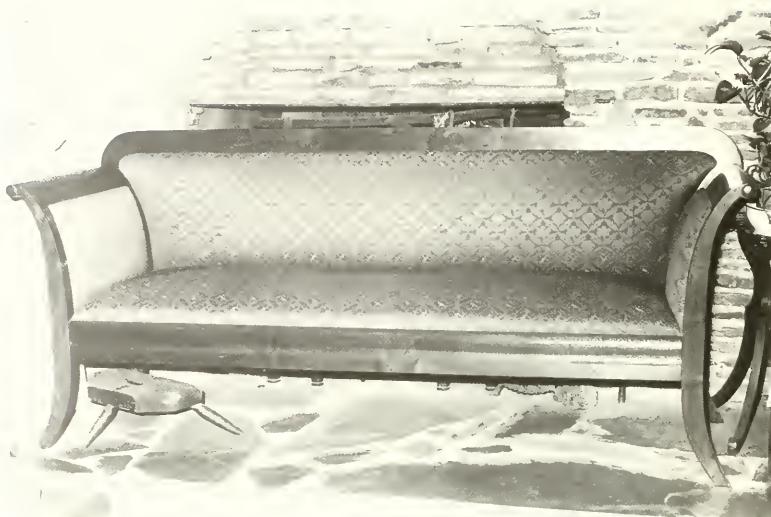
rich Herbst: one for "sofa cushions—the making" and the other for "3 bushels of hair."<sup>47</sup> Given that there is no evidence that the sofa in figure 18 was ever upholstered over the rails, the webbing (replaced here by second-generation webbing) probably supported some kind of cushion. Although the central brace is replaced on this example, structural evidence suggests that the sofa originally had a central brace that would have helped to prevent the webbing and cushion

from sagging in the middle. Missing from this piece are the front and back central legs. The central mortises under the rails still contain jagged wood fragments indicating that the legs may have been broken off at some point, perhaps intentionally in an effort to update the look of the sofa so that it would more closely resemble the newer style being made by Salem cabinetmakers in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

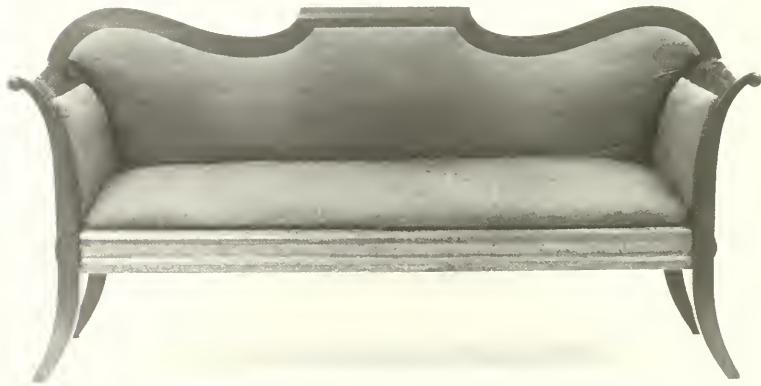
The German and Danish influence on North Carolina Moravian upholstered furniture, particularly sofas, continues well into the nineteenth century with the introduction of the Biedermeier taste. Salem sofas become shallower, possibly eliminating their use as daybeds and securing their function as purely seating furniture. The overall appearance of the sofas is more elegant. The privately owned example shown in *figure 19* descended in the Petersen family and is marked with the stamp Petersen used to mark his tools. Two additional sofas in the Old Salem collection have more elaborate scrolled crest rails in addition to the splayed legs and scrolled arms. One such



18. Sofa, maker unknown; poplar, paint, cotton and jute webbing; Salem, North Carolina; 1810–30. LOA 76"; HOA 31½"; DOA 25¾". MRF S-15147, Old Salem Collection Acc. 4222.



19. Sofa by Karsten Petersen; walnut and yellow pine with modern upholstery materials; Salem, North Carolina; 1830-40. LOA 79"; HOA 35 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; DOA 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". MRF S-2230. *Private collection.*



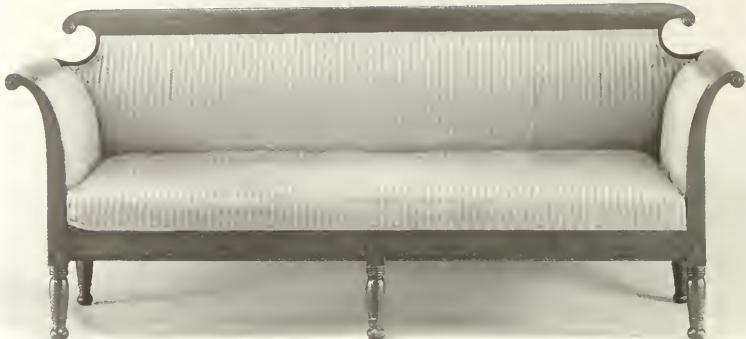
20. Sofa by Karsten Petersen; cherry and poplar, curled horschair, wool, grass, linen, some modern upholstery materials; Salem, North Carolina; 1830-50. LOA 72"; HOA 25"; DOA 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". MRF S-6230, *Old Salem Collection Acc. 2837.2.*



21. *Interior in the Amaliegade* by Wilhelm Bendz, c. 1829, oil on canvas. HOA 32.3 cm; WOA 49 cm. Courtesy of the Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark; Acc. 31.

example is shown in *figure 20*. All three sofas are strikingly similar to the one depicted in the 1829 Wilhelm Bendz painting of a Danish interior (see *figure 21*).

Another example of the Biedermeier influence can be seen in the Salem sofa illustrated in *figure 22* (shown with modern upholstery) and its resemblance to the sofa seen in the 1832 painting by Danish artist Constantin Hansen (see *figure 23*). Notice the use of the scrolled arms combined with turned legs in both examples. The sofa in *figure 22* was clearly intended to be upholstered over the rails as the interior edges of the wooden frame are slightly recessed. Interestingly, the woman in the portrait hanging over the sofa in the Hansen painting (*figure 23*) appears to be dressed in clothing typical for Moravian women in the eighteenth century. The most distinctive



22. Sofa, maker unknown; cherry and poplar with modern upholstery materials; Salem, North Carolina; 1820–40. LOA 81"; HOA 34"; DOA 23". MRF S-15144. *Old Salem Collection Acc.*, S-574.

part of her attire is the haube on her head fastened at the neck with a blue ribbon. Moravian women in America and abroad traditionally wore different colored ribbons with their hauben to indicate their marital status. A blue ribbon was worn by married women. That the portrait is included in the painting seems to be a Moravian connection and may help to explain the stylistic similarities between the sofa in the painting and the Salem example.<sup>48</sup>

Although references to sofas in Salem are few prior to the 1820s, the number of references increases steadily after the second decade of the nineteenth century. Old Salem owns one account book from the shop of Karsten Petersen that served variously as his daybook and journal. The account book seems to be one of at least three because notations in the book refer to an "old book" and a "new



23. *A Hunter Shows a Little Girl His Bag* by Constantin Hansen, 1832, oil on canvas. HOA 44.5 cm; WOA 34 cm. Courtesy of NY Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, Denmark; Acc. 1856.

book." Despite being only one of a series, the Petersen account book includes a wealth of information about cabinetmaking in Salem in the 1820s through the 1840s and in some cases about the residents themselves.

A February 1825 entry in Petersen's book includes an account of Br. Hulthin, one-time master cabinetmaker in and business manager

of the Single Brothers' House when the entry was made. The entry reads as follows: "Feb. 2 Br. Hulthin, Canape Polstern \$5.50, twine .25, 7 yards cord .56, 4 yards alte .20, leather and glue, .30, nails and fillets [trim] .40. paid 7.21."<sup>49</sup> The translator of this account book, which was originally written in German, mistook "Canape Polstern" to be canopy bolsters. Despite his Danish and German background, Petersen and his contemporaries frequently used French terms for furniture. The French term for settee is *canapé*, as noted earlier in the discussion of the inventories of Reichel and Van Vleck's furnishings. Therefore, the correct translation for "Canape Polstern" is "Settee Cushions." Because the journal lists nails, glue, and trim, this entry may very well refer to the upholstery of a settee rather than the making of loose cushions. In 1827 Constantin Benner purchased a "Canape" or settee from Petersen for \$27.00. Although the journal does not note upholstery, the high price of the piece implies that it was upholstered.

Perhaps Petersen, like the saddlers—both his contemporary Heinrich Herbst and Herbst's predecessor, Charles Holder—was considered to have special skills in the area of upholstery. In fact, Herbst must have upholstered furniture in both leather and fabric, for in 1830 the Salem Diacony purchased "14 yds of Domestic plaid (for Herbst for a sofa)" from Jacob Blum & Co. (a store in Salem) on November 22. The charge was \$2.40.<sup>50</sup> Less than a month later, Salem's business manager, Lewis Benzien, paid Herbst for sofa repairs, thread, tacks, and four bushels of hair. The total for the repairs and supplies was \$4.80.<sup>51</sup>

Herbst and Petersen were not the only craftsmen repairing and upholstering sofas in Salem in the nineteenth century. In 1839, Peter Fetter, a turner and chairmaker was paid \$50.00 for the making of four settees for the tavern.<sup>52</sup> Considering the relatively low price of the settees, it seems unlikely that Fetter was paid for upholstered pieces. Perhaps someone else was doing the upholstery work or making cushions for them. Of course, they might have been intended to remain unupholstered. The 1848 Salem Tavern inventory lists four settees in the parlor along with eighteen chairs.<sup>53</sup>

Charles Kremer and Edward Belo were paid \$2.75 in 1841 for the making of sofa cushions.<sup>54</sup> Kremer (his portrait is shown in *figure 24*) had worked in the shop of saddler Heinrich Herbst for a time and may have learned furniture-upholstering skills there. Of course, he could just as well have learned those skills as part of his training prior to coming to Salem. By the 1840s cabinetmaker Petersen had some competition from the shop of his former apprentice Jacob Siewers, who by this time was in partnership with his brother John Siewers. An 1846 receipt for work done by John Siewers includes a sofa purchased by Thomas Pfohl for the Bishop's House in Salem for \$25.00.<sup>55</sup> An 1844 account lists a charge for the painting and repairing of a sofa by Siewers for Thomas Pfohl.<sup>56</sup> Jacob and his brother John Siewers were partners for several years and during that time they evidently did some upholstery work as well. A portrait of John Siewers is presented in *figure 25*. In 1847 they charged the church \$4.00 for covering and varnishing a sofa.<sup>57</sup> The bulk of this charge must have been for the upholstery work itself because an 1849 charge for simply varnishing a sofa frame was only \$0.75.<sup>58</sup>

Petersen and his contemporaries seem to have rejected many characteristics seen on what today we today refer to as empire furniture and early Victorian classical furniture found in more urban areas and even in other parts of North Carolina; characteristics such as figured veneer, carving, and heavier pillar and scroll ornaments. Even as the Salem sofa evolved as the nineteenth century progressed, Salem cabinetmakers kept the lines of their pieces elegantly simple. The sofa seen in *figure 20* is in the Old Salem collection and attributed to Karsten Petersen. It descended in the Petersen family before it was given to Old Salem by Karsten Petersen's granddaughter. This sofa bears a remarkable resemblance to the Salem sofa that appears in the Daniel Welfare portrait of Salem hat maker Isaac Boner and his wife Elizabeth (*figure 26*).

This sofa is a fascinating example of the Moravian genius when it comes to upholstery. The piece takes the concept of a slip seat to an extreme degree. For the most part, the frame is bed bolted together. The various upholstered components, including the seat, are held in



24. Portrait of Charles Kremer by Daniel Welfare; oil on canvas; Salem, North Carolina; 1830–40. HOA 22"; WOA 19"; DOA 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". MRF S-219, Old Salem Collection Acc. 2922.1.



25. Portrait of John Siewers from an original tintype; Salem, North Carolina; ca. 1865. MRF S-27886, courtesy of the Archives of the Moravian Church, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, NC.

place with screws and can be detached with relative ease for covering.

The underside of the seat is composed of boards rabbeted together to support the foundation materials. The foundation materials used in this sofa seem to be fairly standard among upholstered pieces in Salem. Although the various components of the sofa have been reupholstered several times, the foundation materials on the back and arm panels appear to be original. The foundation materials of these components consist of coarse grass and curled horsehair cov-



26. Portrait of Isaac and Elizabeth Boner by Daniel Welfare; oil on canvas; Salem, North Carolina, 1835. HOA 21"; WOA 17". MRES-13849,  
*Old Salem Collection Acc.*  
p-320.

ered in coarsely woven linen. Evidence of the original show cover has been obliterated by subsequent treatments.

It is unclear whether the original upholstery of any of the later sofas included the use of springs. While several sofas do have solid bottoms and are currently upholstered with springs, this writer has been unable to locate references to springs being ordered or used. The one sofa that has been de-upholstered to the point of revealing the



27. Rocking chair, possibly by John Vogler; split oak, leather, wool, cornhusks; Salem, North Carolina; 1830–40. HOA 36"; WOA 30"; DOA 18". MRF S-6797, *Old Salem Collection Acc. 421.1*.



28. Armchair, possibly by John Vogler; split oak, modern upholstery materials; Salem, North Carolina; 1830–40. HOA 32"; WOA 18"; DOA 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". MRF S-6793, *Old Salem Collection Acc. 259.11*.

springs showed the use of early-twentieth-century springs. Other foundation materials found in Salem upholstered furniture include finer grasses, newspaper, and even corn husks, as in the case of the small rocking chair shown in figure 27. Although the upholstery has been replaced, the side chair shown in figure 28 was probably originally upholstered with the same materials. Both of these chairs have a strong family tradition of having been made by silversmith John



29. Rocking chair, maker unknown; maple, hickory, oak, leather, tow, and linen; Salem, North Carolina, 1810–30. HOA 43 $\frac{3}{4}$ "; WOA 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". MRF5-9818, *Old Salem Collection Acc. C-370.*

Vogler, although Vogler could easily have purchased them elsewhere in the Backcountry. The seat of the rocking chair is upholstered in leather under which is a layer of wool over cornhusks.

As mentioned earlier, Old Salem has a very important eighteenth-century sick chair in its collection. Even in the middle of the nineteenth century, North Carolina Moravians seem to have had a tradition of using upholstered furniture for the care of the sick. Two chairs that descended in the John Vogler family are said to have been used by his wife Christina (1792–1863) as her health declined in mid-century. The first is the rocking chair in figure 29. While the rockers



29a. Detail of the underside of the frame of the rocking chair presented in *figure 29*.

and footrest may have been later additions, the chair has its original leather upholstery that may have survived in such good condition in part because, according to the accession records, it was protected by a black (probably horsehair) cover of some kind. This cover was not removed until after the chair had been added to the Wachovia Historical Society collection. The seat is supported by a two-board platform chamfered into the front and back seat rails with what appears to be webbing above (see *figure 29a*). The stuffing material is tow held in place with a linen skimmer on the arms and seat. The original leather show cover is still intact. The back of the chair is buttoned with small leather tufts spaced regularly across the upper and lower back. The tufts are nailed into place with tacks that go through the leather show cover and the stuffing, securing all of these materials to curved vertical wooden strips on the rear of the chair (see *figure 29b*). A small tear in the leather reveals a natural and blue striped linen skimmer beneath the leather. Also visible through the tear is the tow used as foundation stuffing.

A similar chair, also in the Old Salem collection and also attributed by the Vogler family to the hand of John Vogler, is the leather upholstered invalid chair seen in *figure 30*, complete with hardware for either attaching some kind of tray or perhaps attaching a mechanism for holding someone in the chair. The seat of this chair is supported by wooden platform similar to the one on the rocking chair, but this time the webbing is on the outside of the platform (see *figure 30a*). Interestingly, John Vogler marked this chair on the bottom with



29b. Rear view of rocking chair presented in *figure 29*.

his initials. Tow is used as stuffing in this chair just as it is used in the rocking chair associated with the Voglers. Although the front of the chair has a show cover, the skimmer is exposed on the rear of the chair.

Another interesting component of the stuffing of this chair is an August 1858 newspaper left carefully folded and stuffed into the back to offer firm support in the lower section of the chair. The newspaper is signed by John Vogler (see *figure 30b*). Although newspaper is not unheard of as an upholstery stuffing material, the fact that John signed it is significant as is the date of the paper in confirming the



30. Sick chair probably by John Vogler; cherry maple, hickory, oak, poplar, leather, linen, tow, newspaper, cotton, brass, iron; Salem, North Carolina; 1858. HOA 45 $\frac{1}{2}$ "; WOA 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". MRF S-27216, Old Salem Collection Acc. 4434.

use of the chair by his wife Christina as her illness became more serious. In the memoir they wrote for their mother, Christina's children commented that,

Mother was naturally of a very strong and healthy constitution, but during the past *five years* [emphasis added] she has been subject to very frequent & severe attacks of illness which gradually undermined her system. . . . Medical skill was sought & tried for years, but though momentary relief was obtained the cause could not be removed.<sup>59</sup>

Christina died in July of 1863, almost exactly five years after the newspaper was placed so carefully beneath the leather show cover of this chair. This is most likely as much of a confirmation as we will ever get as to when the chair was made—five years before Christina's death when her illness became so troublesome. This chair is probably the one mentioned again in an 1871 inventory of John and Christina's son Elias's household. The list of objects in the parlor includes an "Invalid Chair" valued at \$5.00.<sup>60</sup>

The Old Salem collection includes evidence of upholstery beyond chairs, sofas, and settees. In 1838, saddler Charles Kremer was paid \$6.00 by Salem warden Thomas Pfohl for "covering a chair and table (for Church)."<sup>61</sup> Kremer might have been covering a table such as the one seen in figure 31 on exhibit in the Single Brothers' House Saal. A table such as this one was listed on a 1776 inventory of the Gemein Haus as "The table with green Curtain and black leather cover."<sup>62</sup> Perhaps by 1838 the eighteenth-century table cover had been considerably worn and was in need of replacement. In 1844 Edward Belo was paid for 1½-yards of velvet for a desk fall<sup>63</sup> and in 1850 Thomas Pfohl was charged \$0.50 by J. D. Siewers for the "covering of a writing desk with velvet."<sup>64</sup>



30a. Detail of underside of frame of sick chair presented in figure 30.



30b. Detail of newspaper with John Vogler's signature found under the leather showcover on the sick chair presented in figure 30.



31. Upholstered table (at left) on exhibit in the Single Brothers' House Saal, Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The 1820 inventory of the estate of the Reverend Samuel Stots lists among other furnishings, two cushions and a covered stool, each valued at \$0.30.<sup>65</sup> The covered stool could have been as simple as the Windsor stool illustrated in *figure 32*, on which the show cover has been replaced numerous times, or perhaps an earlier version of a little footstool like the one in *figure 33* covered in the Berlin work of Cornelia K. Smith, a student at Salem Girls' Boarding School 1851–53. One wonders if the piano stool teacher Sophia Chitzel purchased from Petersen in 1824 was intended as a base on which to exhibit her own handiwork or perhaps the work of one of her students.<sup>66</sup>

References to curtains and curtain rods in North Carolina Moravian inventories, church receipts, and Petersen's account book are numerous, including one listing for "1 frame and iron rods for Bed curtains" on the list of furnishings and garden tools left behind by Rev. Reichel when he returned to Bethlehem.<sup>67</sup> There are many references throughout the nineteenth century to yardages of furniture prints, furniture calicoes, and furniture check beyond those already mentioned. It's likely that some of these fabrics might have been used for window or bed curtains. There are also references to fringe, curtain pins, curtain boards, and, in the case of the deSchweinitz correspondence mentioned earlier, "vanity curtains with tassels."<sup>68</sup> With the exception of the deSchweinitz reference, few of the nota-



32. Windsor stool by Karsten Petersen; oak, paint, curled horsehair, grass; Salem, North Carolina, 1820–40. HOA 21"; DIA 14½". MRF S-15142, Old Salem Collection Acc. 779.

33. Footstool, possibly by Karsten Petersen; maple, poplar, pine, linen, wool (needlework cover by Cornelia K. Smith, 1851–53); Salem, North Carolina; 1820–40; HOA 8"; WOA 12"; LOA 12". MRF S-15143, Old Salem Collection Acc. 5-48.

tions regarding curtains give much descriptive information about how the curtains were made or installed, although the same people who upholstered furniture were apparently involved in the making and hanging of curtains in the mid-nineteenth century. For example, Jacob Siewers was paid \$0.75 in 1841 for the making of a curtain board<sup>70</sup> and Thomas Pfohl purchased curtains from Petersen in 1845.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps a fitting end to a discussion about Moravian upholstery in North Carolina is a few references to what may have been upholstered coffins. The Petersen account book includes charges for forty-four coffins made in the shop between 1824 and 1843. They vary in price from about \$2.00 to \$12.00 depending on the size, type of wood, and date of manufacture. Although people in the twenty-first century imagine that they will be laid to rest in a beautifully lined and padded coffin complete with satin pillows, coffin linings in the Moravian town of Salem apparently were a relatively uncommon luxury. Only twice, once in 1833 and once in 1835, does Petersen record that a coffin had a lined interior.<sup>72</sup> The coffin made in 1835 and charged to Natin [sic] Chaffin was lined in flannel—less flamboyant than the satin lining in coffins today, but an apparent luxury for the nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup> Both of the lined coffins were constructed of walnut, the most costly wood used for coffins. One cost \$10.00 and one cost \$12.00, making them some of the most expensive coffins sold by Petersen between 1824 and 1843. Of course it is unlikely that we will ever know how the interior linings were applied to the coffins, but the relatively high cost implies upholstery. This author has not studied other nineteenth-century Backcountry cabinetmaker's account books to see if they list lined or upholstered coffins, but she suspects that just as upholstery of the furniture for the living was unusual in the early nineteenth-century Backcountry, so was the upholstery of furniture for those who had departed this life.

While most of the extant evidence of upholstery is found on seating furniture including stools, chairs, and sofas or settees made by Salem cabinetmakers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,

documentary sources also point to Moravian craftsmen undertaking the upholstery of other forms such as table and desk tops as well as coffins. In the absence of craftsmen devoted to the trade of upholstery, at least three of the saddlers and four of the cabinetmakers working in Salem in the eighteenth and nineteenth century seem to have satisfied their customers' desire for upholstered furniture. Even John Vogler, a silversmith by trade, may have tried his hand at upholstering furniture for his own family.

Interestingly, several of the upholstered pieces mentioned in the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century North Carolina Moravian records appear on inventories of buildings owned by the church: the chairs in the various rooms of *Gemein Haus*, the settee that is listed on the inventory of furnishings in the living quarters of two ministers in Salem (first Reichel and later Van Vleck), and the eighteenth-century sick chair are all examples of church-owned upholstered furniture. Later in the nineteenth century, documentary research offers more evidence for upholstered furniture owned by individuals and families living in Salem. Perhaps the early evidence points to church ownership because individuals did not own as many upholstered pieces. It is tempting to speculate that in the early period most upholstered pieces were owned by the church and adorned rooms where church leaders would be likely to entertain official visitors to the community. On the other hand, since most of the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century documents available for study are related to the church and church leaders rather than ordinary residents of the North Carolina communities, it is impossible to know for sure the extent to which the households of other congregation members had upholstered furniture in this period. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, it is clear that individual residents purchased and enjoyed upholstered furniture.

Was upholstered furniture considered an indulgence by the North Carolina Moravians? At least one member of the Salem congregation considered the sofa in his home to be an object "pertaining to vanity or decoration," referring to it as a luxury. The North Carolina Moravians certainly seemed to have had sophisticated taste in furnishings

compared to their Backcountry neighbors. It is clear that the North Carolina Moravians were aware of proper upholstery techniques and materials, adapted them to suit their skills and their needs, and applied them to create an outstanding body of work unmatched in any other community in the Backcountry.

Many factors contributed to the North Carolina Moravians' awareness of fashionable furnishings, such as upholstered furniture and their desire to have them, including their trade involvement in such urban areas as Charleston, Philadelphia, and Petersburg. Furthermore, the Moravians in North Carolina were influenced by their European counterparts, some of whom immigrated to the North Carolina communities via Pennsylvania and, no doubt, brought ideas about furniture forms and styles with them. Finally, it may have been the church-controlled social and economic environment in which the North Carolina Moravians lived and worked that allowed them a quality of life complete with "such luxuries as sofas."

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#### END NOTES

1. Albert Mathews, ed. *Journal of William Loughton Smith, 1790-1791*. Cambridge: The University Press, 1917: 72.

2. A frequently used substitute for *Die Wachau* is *Wachovia*, the latinized form of the word.

3. A number of Church boards facilitated the management of the community. The *Aeltesten Conferenz* or Elders' Conference was responsible for the spiritual affairs of the community; the *Anfueher Collegium* or Board of Supervisors managed the material and financial affairs of the community; and the *Helper Conferenz* or Helpers' Conference was an advisory board made up of ministers. The Helpers' Conference evolved into what is known today as the Provincial Elders' Conference, which is the administrative body of the Moravian Church, Southern Province. Each of these boards kept prolific records and many of the early German records have been translated from German to English.

4. Mathews, 72-75.

5. Anna D. Elmore, ed. *A Journey from South Carolina to Connecticut in the year 1809: The Journal of William D. Martin*. Charlotte: Heritage House, 1959:11-13.

6. See John Bivins, "Baroque Elements in North Carolina Moravian Furniture," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, Vol. II, No. 1 (May 1976).

7. Letter from deSchweinitz to Hoeffel, 9 October 1821. Original in Moravian Church Archives, Northern Province, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Transcription in Old Salem Personnel and Subject Files in MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

8. The total number of upholsterers listed in the MESDA catalog as working in the South is 286. Of these, 157 are recorded in the Chesapeake region and 111 in the Lowcountry. Twelve of these upholsterers are listed as working in Augusta, Georgia. Although Augusta has traditionally been considered a part of the Backcountry, newer scholarship suggests that especially in the early nineteenth century, Augusta was more closely associated with the Lowcountry. Therefore, the twelve upholsterers in Augusta have been included as part of the total number of upholsterers documented as working in the Lowcountry.

9. Edward Hazen. *Popular Technology or Professions and Trades (Hazen's Panorama)*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1846. Reprinted by the Early American Industries Association, 1981: 146.

10. Gillian Lindt Gollin in *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966:156. The author notes that, "In 1747, the most lucrative business in Bethlehem appears to have been the tannery." According to Karen Huetter, Educational Services, Historic Bethlehem Partnership, Inc., the high point of the tannery was ca. 1760–80. Production reached its peak during the Revolutionary War when the Bethlehem tannery was producing leather hides for both the community and the Continental Army.

11. "Tanyard Inventory April 30th 1818" (R 704:4), Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

12. "Tanyard Inventory 1839" (R704:4), Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

13. Translations of the "Inventory of What the Single Brother's House Took Over from the Diacony January 1, 1770. The Saddler's Trade." Originals in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Translations titled "Accounts and Inventories" in Old Salem Lot 62 Files, MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

14. Translations of the "Inventory of What the Single Brother's House Took Over from the Diacony January 1, 1770. The Saddler's Trade." The entire 1771 inventory is not translated, but items new to the 1771 inventory are translated and listed. Originals in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Translations titled "Accounts and Inventories" in Old Salem Lot 62 Files, MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

15. "Inventory of Sundry Supplies, 1784." Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Translation titled "Accounts and Inventories" in Old Salem Lot 62 Files, MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

16. *Ibid*, 1785.

17. *Ibid*, 1786.

18. Salem Diacony Journal IV, 13 June 1825. "Sundry Accounts Dr. to Cash." Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

19. See Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folders. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

20. Godfrey Haga Letters, Memorandum 20 June 1793 (C:22). Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

21. *Ibid*.

22. Translation of various board minutes pertaining to Adam Koffler. Original copies of

minutes in Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Compilation of translated minutes in Old Salem Personnel and Subject Files in MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

23. Salem Diacony Journal 1772–1800. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

24. Minutes of the Aufseher Collegium, 17 November 1766. Moravian Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Translation by Erika Huber in Personnel Files in MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

25. Translation of various board minutes pertaining to Charles Holder. Original copies of minutes in Moravian Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Compilation of translated minutes in Personnel Files in MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

26. Minutes of the Aufseher Collegium, 3 November 1789. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Translation by Erika Huber in Old Salem Personnel and Subject Files in MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

27. Translation of various board minutes pertaining to Charles Holder. Original copies of minutes in Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Compilation of translated minutes in Old Salem Personnel and Subject Files in MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

28. The Helfer Conferenz was an advisory board made up of ministers.

29. Adelaide L. Fries, ed. *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina. Volume VZ*. Raleigh: The North Carolina Historical Commission, 1943: 2476.

30. *Ibid.* 256.

31. Inventory of the Salem Male Academy, 21 January 1828. Boys' School Manuscripts. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

32. The Moravian Museum in Historic Bethlehem, Pennsylvania has in its collection a leather upholstered easy chair marked, "1<sup>st</sup> KRANKEN STUBE 88." The translation of *Kranken Stube* is "sick room" indicating where the chair was used.

33. Some Lists of Furnishings Belonging to the Congregation Diacony, "Furnishings in the Warden's House," 1812. Originals in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Translations in the MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Salem Community Store Journal, 1814–15, page 118. Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Copy in the Old Salem Inc. Research Library, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

36. Nancy Rosebrock. "Upholstered Chair Survey Report." Original in Accession file C-485, MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

37. Salem Community Store Letter Book 1801–1813. Copy in the Old Salem Inc. Research Library, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

38. "Peter Wolle Diaries," pages 172–3. Translated by Peter S. and Irene P. Seadle. Translation in the Old Salem Inc. Research Library, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

39. Peter Thornton. *Authentic Décor: The Domestic Interior 1620–1920*. New York: Viking 1984: 198, figure 260.

40. "List of the House Furnishings which belong to the [Carl Gotthold] Reichel's future home," 1802. Translation in the MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

olina. Early translators understood the term *canapé* to be *canopy*, but given the Moravians propensity for using French terms to describe furniture, the term is actually *canapé* and therefore, the proper translation to English is *settee*.

41. "Furnishings and Garden Tools which Br. Reichel leaves in Salem," 19 April 1811. Translation in the MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

42. Peter Thornton, *Authentic Decor: The Domestic Interior 1620–1920*. New York: Viking, 1984; 181, figure 230.

43. *Ibid.* 201, figures 264, 265, 266.

44. *Ibid.* 276.

45. Diary of Louisa Cynthia Hagen Sussdorf (1837–1876), 11 July 1837. Transcription and original in the collection of Old Salem Inc., Accession number 4364. Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

46. *Ibid.* 22 April 1838.

47. "Gottlieb Byham Dr. to Henry Herbst," September and October 1822. Receipt in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1823. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

48. Paul Peuker, Moravian Archivist at Herrnhut, Germany, graciously checked the Church Register at Christiansfeld for the names of the artist and subject of this painting since Christiansfeld was the main Moravian settlement in Denmark. Neither name appeared in the Church Register, but that does not necessarily mean neither had a connection to the Moravian Church. Additional research may shed more light on any Moravian connection that may exist.

49. Account Book of Karsten Petersen, 2 February 1825, page 3, Original and translation part of the Schober Papers in the collection of Old Salem Inc., Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

50. "Salem Diaconie Dr to Jacob Blum & Co, 22 November 1830." Receipt found in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1830. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

51. "Lewis Benzen Dr to Henry Herbst," December 1830. Found in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1830. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

52. "Thomas S. Pföhl Dr. to Peter Fetter" September 1839. Receipt found in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1839. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

53. "Articles on Hand at the Tavern in Salem, 1849" Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Translated transcription in the MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

54. "Mr. Thomas Pföhl Warden of Salem to Kremer & Belo Dr," 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1841. Receipt found in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1841. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

55. "Thomas Pföhl in Act. With J & J Siewers," 24 January 1846. Receipt in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1846. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

56. "Thomas Pföhl in Act. with J. Siewers," 28 October 1843. Receipt in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1844. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

57. "Rev. Charles Hege in Account with J.D. & J Siewers," 5 June 1847. Receipt in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1847. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

58. 'Thomas Pfohl in Acct with John D. Siewers,' 27 July 1849. Receipt in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1850. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

59. Memoir of Christina Vogler who died 8 July 1863. Original in collection of Old Salem Inc., Accession number 4242.61, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

60. "Schedule B.2. (Inventory) In the Matter of E.A. Vogler-Bankrupt. Personal Property," 5 July 1871. Original in the collection of Old Salem Inc., Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

61. "Salem Warden Thomas Pfohl Dr. to Charles Kremer," 6 April 1838. Receipt found in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1838. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

62. "Inventory of the Gemein Haus, 1776." Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Translation in the MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

63. "E. Belo's Bill," 30 April 1844. Bill found in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1842. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

64. "Rev. Thomas Pfohl in act with J.D. Siewers, May 10, 1850." Receipt in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1851. Moravian Church Archives, Sourthern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

65. "Inventory of the Estate of Samuel Stots dec'd October 3, 1820." Microfilm Reel A-1. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

66. Karsten Petersen Account Book, 9 December 1824, page 3. Original and translation part of the Schober Papers in the collection of Old Salem Inc., Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

67. "Furnishings and Garden Tools which Br. Reichel leaves in Salem," 19 April 1811. Translation in the MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Original in the Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

68. Letter from deSchweinitz to Huefsl, 9 October 1821. Original in Moravian Church Archives, Northern Province, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Transcription in Old Salem Personnel and Subject Files in MESDA Research Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

69. "Thomas Pfohl in ac with J. Siewers," 26 August 1841. Found in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1844. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

70. "Thomas Pföhl Dr. to K. Petersen," 27 November 1845. Found in Bills, Receipts, and Vouchers Folder, 1846. Moravian Church Archives, Southern Provincee, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

71. Karsten Petersen Account Book, 26 January 1833, page 43; 20 October 1835, page 43. Original and translation part of the Schober Papers in the collection of Old Salem Inc., Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

72. Little has been written on coffins and undertaking in the South in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Brad Rauschenberg's article, "Coffinmaking and Undertaking in Charleston 1705-1820," (*Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, Vol. XVI, No. 1 [May 1990]), is one excellent discussion of the subject. Rauschenberg documents the lining of coffins with flannel in Charleston, revealing similarities to upholstered coffins in Salem.

The Moravian Archives, Southern Province is located at 457 S. Church Street, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27101. The mailing address is P.O. Box L Salem Station, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27108.

# Willis Cowling (1788–1828)

Richmond Cabinetmaker

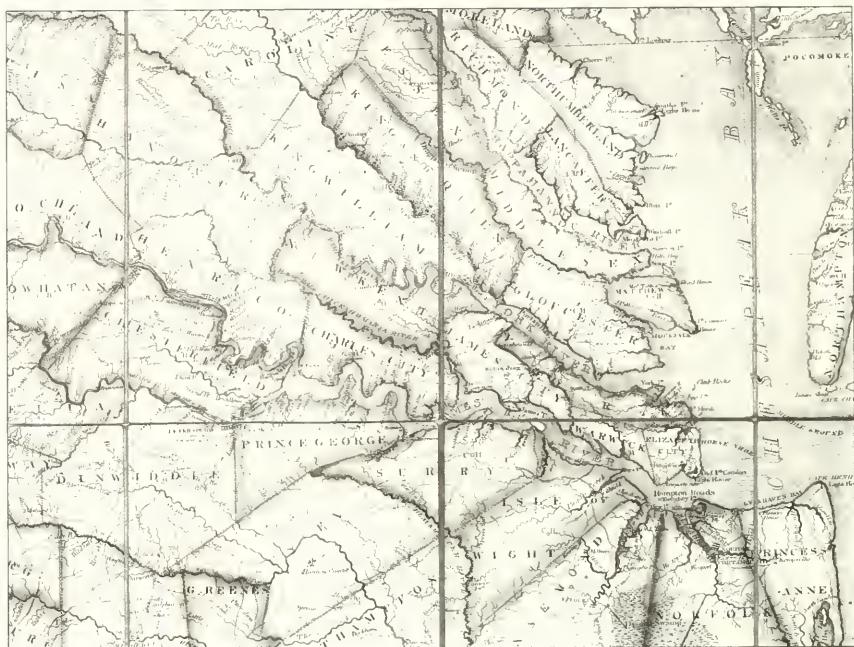
J. CHRISTIAN KOLBE

## INTRODUCTION

THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA contains an interesting set of papers that document the business affairs of Richmond cabinetmaker Willis Cowling (1788–1828).<sup>1</sup> Collected by a special commissioner appointed to settle Cowling's estate, the papers were not disposed of after the settlement—which was usual—but were stored among the Richmond city court records and are now housed at the Library of Virginia.

The Cowling Papers provide a wealth of information pertaining to Cowling's activity as a cabinetmaker, as well as his mercantile activity. They contain correspondence to Cowling, accounts, invoices, furniture price lists, and cancelled checks. This research note uses this documentation to look at three aspects of Cowling's career: his connection to northern cabinetmakers and merchants, his role in relation to other Virginia cabinetmakers, and his price lists.

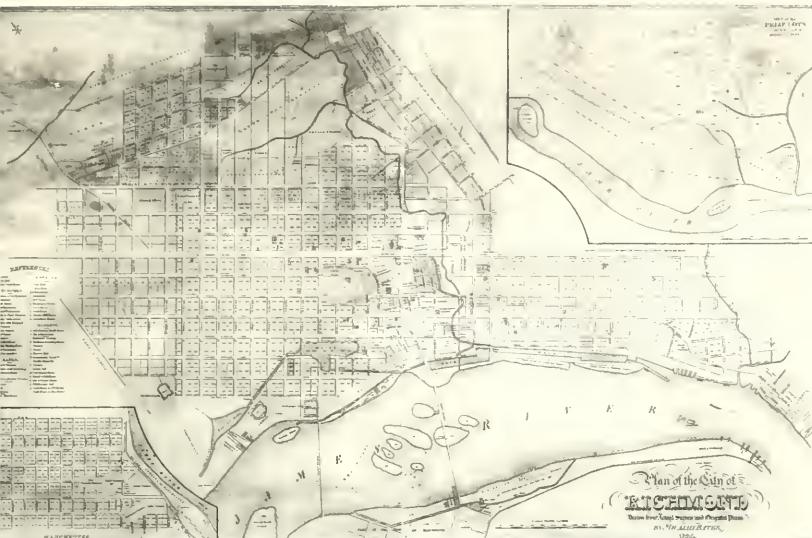
The 1820 census lists Richmond, with a population of 12,067 inhabitants, Norfolk with 8,478, and Alexandria with 8,218. The census also provides data for the number of persons engaged in commerce and manufacturing. Richmond had 539 persons engaged in



1. Detail of *A Map of Virginia Formed from Actual Surveys* by James Madison, William Prentis, and William Davis, 1807. Colored, engraved map. Originally published in six sheets. Courtesy of Map Collection (75/1807), Archives Research Services, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.

commerce compared to 147 in Norfolk and 331 in Alexandria. In the area of manufacturing Richmond had 1,305 persons compared to five in Norfolk, and 699 in Alexandria.<sup>2</sup> See figure 1 for an 1807 map of Virginia; figure 2 presents an 1835 engraved map of Richmond by Micajah Bates. An 1822 view of Richmond by J.L. Boqueta de Woiseri is illustrated in figure 3.

Marianne Sheldon in her dissertation *Richmond, Virginia: The Town and Henrico County to 1820* suggests that from 1780 to 1820 Richmond attempted to become a commercial center, but failed because it was not able to capture the market of the Virginia back-



2. *A Plan of the City of Richmond Drawn from Actual Survey and Original Plans by Micajah Bates, 1835.*  
Engraved map. Courtesy of Map Collection (755.44/1835), Archives Research Services, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.



3. *A View of Richmond, Virginia*  
by J. L. Boqueta de Woiseri, 1822.  
Engraved print.  
HOA 23", WOA 35".  
Courtesy of Virginia Historical Society  
(negative 053.3).

country. Commercially Richmond was overshadowed by New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. After 1820 Richmond began to shift its focus to becoming a manufacturing center in the areas of flour, tobacco, and coal and iron.<sup>3</sup> Cowling's entrepreneurial activities, which are discussed latter, involved selling coal and tobacco in New York. Richmond's move to become a manufacturing center placed it in further contact with a national economy which in turn provided for a further influx of northern furniture. The Cowling papers show how Willis Cowling dealt with the problem of northern competition.

WILLIS COWLING,  
RICHMOND FURNITUREMAKER

Willis Cowling, the son of Josiah Cowling and his wife, Urania Munro, was born in Nansemond County, Virginia.<sup>4</sup> Nothing is known of his training or early work as a cabinetmaker. The first record of Cowling as a cabinetmaker is found in the Prentis Papers at the University of Virginia. From 1811 to 1813, Joseph Prentis of Suffolk, Virginia, patronized Cowling's shop for repairing and making furniture.<sup>5</sup> In 1815 Henry Gray, administrator of Joseph Gray, deceased, of Isle of Wight County, Virginia, paid Willis Cowling \$1.00 for making a coffin for a slave.<sup>6</sup> The personal property tax was paid in the county or city where one was a resident. The Nansemond County personal property taxes do not survive before 1815, and Willis Cowling is not on the list for 1815.<sup>7</sup> In Appendix II of Fillmore Norfleet's book *Suffolk in Virginia*, is the listing for Cowling & Driver, cabinetmakers, dated 1811. While the author does not explain where he obtained this information, Suffolk is the only large town in Nansemond County.<sup>8</sup> In 1816 Cowling appears for the first time on the personal property tax list for the city of Richmond.<sup>9</sup>

On coming to Richmond, Cowling entered a cabinetmaking community which was seeking to come to grips with the specialization and increased production from the furniture business in the northeast. For an understanding of the first four decades of the cabi-

netmaking tradition of Richmond city, the reader should consult Aline Zeno's thesis, "The Furniture Craftsmen of Richmond, 1780–1820".<sup>10</sup> In the 14 September 1816 issue of the *Richmond Commercial Compiler*, Camillus Taylor, turner, advertised that he could be found at Mr. W. Cowling's shop on the corner of F and 13th Streets.<sup>11</sup> In a letter of February 1817 to Joseph Prentis of Suffolk, Virginia, Cowling stated that he and fellow Richmond cabinetmaker, Robert Poore, was going to purchase \$1,000–\$1,150 worth of mahogany.<sup>12</sup> Thus began Cowling's long friendship with Robert Poore. In his will, Cowling made the following request of his executors,

I therefore direct, that my executors will in all transactions that they may have with my esteemed friend Robert Poore, acts towards him with all lenity and indulgence, and do at his instance any act concerning my securityships and endorsements for him that will not in their opinion injure my estate.<sup>13</sup>

The 1819 Richmond Directory lists Cowling's shop on the west side of 13th Street between F and 7th Street.<sup>14</sup> Cowling's 1820 policy with the Mutual Assurance Society (presented in *figures 4* and *4a*) describes the property as "A Ware Room & Dwelling house - Walls Brick Roof Slate 3 Stories high" and "B Cabinet Maker's Shop Walls Brick Roof Slate 3 Stories high". Next to parcel "A" was the brick tenement of Robert Poore.<sup>15</sup> While the term "Ware Room" is used in describing parcel "A", there is no record in Cowling's papers that he was selling Northern furniture in a cabinet warehouse. For more information, see Forsyth Alexander's article, "Cabinet Warehousing in the Southern Atlantic Ports, 1783–1820."<sup>16</sup>

He continued his cabinetmaking business in Richmond until his death in 1828.<sup>17</sup> By a codicil to his will Cowling provided the following directions to his executors:

It is my will & desire that my Cabinet-making business shall be carried on after my death as now under the direction of my said executors, until the stock on hand shall be worked up into furniture, if they think it prudent so to do.<sup>18</sup>

Say, *we do hereby declare and affirm, that we hold the above mentioned building, with the land on which it stands, in trust for the Society, and that we will not alienate or dispose of the same, and that we do hereby agree to the constitution, rules and regulations, which are already established, or may hereafter be established by the majority of the named, present in person, or by representatives, or by a majority of the members of the Society, chosen either by the persons themselves, or their proxy duly authorized, or their deputy, as established by us, at any general meeting to be held by the said *Society*, or which are hereafter may be established by the *Executive Committee* of the Society. Witness our hands and seal this *first day**

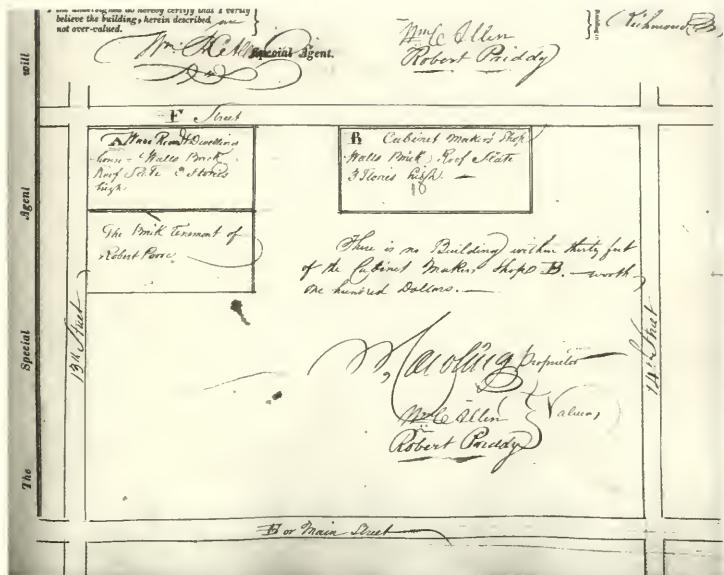
Teste,  
John G. Viles, Social Agent.

WE, the underwriters, being each of us Freeholders, declare and affirm, that we have examined the ob-  
jects mentioned in our bond, and we are of opinion that the sum of \$1000 will east in cash  
to build the same, and that now (after the deduction of Nottingham)  
it is actually worth \$1000. We further declare that the amount above specified to the best of our knowledge and belief,  
as witness our hands.

above printed to the best of our knowledge and belief. As witness our hands  
(the undersigned do hereby certify that I verily.)

believe the buildings herein described  
not over-valued

4. Mutual Assurance Society policy for Willis Cowling's shop, 1820. Mutual Assurance Society (Accession 30177), Declaration and Revaluations of Assurance, Richmond, Virginia 1796–1867, Volume 57, Policy 1475 for Willis Cowling. *Courtesy of Business Records Collection, Archives Research Services, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.*



4a. Detail of sketch of shop on 1820 Mutual Assurance Society policy for Willis Cowling. Courtesy of Business Records Collection, Archives Research Services, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.

Cowling's executors continued to operate the shop after his death.<sup>19</sup> The executor had problems with the estate, however, and the Hustings Court of the city of Richmond appointed a special commissioner to settle the estate.<sup>20</sup> Cities in Virginia which have been incorporated by act of the legislature have their own court of record which is called a Hustings court. The equivalent court of record for a county was the county court. Upon finishing his task, the special Commissioner would have brought his accounts and any accompanying paperwork into court to be examined by the justices. If the justices found the Commissioner's accounts correct, they would

order the estate settled and a record of the settlement would be recorded. Normally any accompanying papers were not retained by the court. As previously stated, in the case of the estate of Willis Cowling this did not happen, and his business papers remained in the Richmond City court records now housed at the Library of Virginia.<sup>21</sup> The papers cover the years 1818–1828.

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS WITH NORTHERN  
CABINETMAKERS AND MERCHANTS

Most of the correspondence from northern cabinetmakers and merchants to Cowling was from New York City, with the rest of the correspondence being from Newark, New Jersey,<sup>22</sup> and Philadelphia.<sup>23</sup> The letters concern wood, hardware, and upholstery materials that Cowling ordered from his northern contacts. Some letters indicate that Cowling sent Virginia coal<sup>24</sup> and tobacco<sup>25</sup> to be sold in northern markets. Zeno, in her thesis on Richmond furniture craftsmen, describes cabinetmakers who sold other items besides the furniture they made as “merchant craftsmen.”<sup>26</sup>

Letters and accounts also document the shipping of logs, boards, veneers, and hardware from New York cabinetmakers and merchants to the South. Mahogany was the wood most frequently mentioned in correspondence, as seen in the following letter of 20 September 1820.

New York 20th Sept. 1820

Sir,

I wrote to you a few days Since that I should wait 2 or 3 days before I bought your Mahogany In hopes of an Auction we have had one of very Small & Comon wood but I could not buy any of it to suit

I have bought for you 16 logs about 3000 ft at 11 Cts which in my opinion is Cheaper wood than the Comon wood I sent you before this is all good Size wood & in my opinion is just about what you want.

It is to be Shipped in the Schooner Native expect to Sail on thursday.

The freight is to be 6 Cts but there is two large Ruffage logs for which you of cours will only  $\frac{1}{2}$  as I ame to have the freight at the neat measurement which will not give him more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  on not that the parcel of

wood bought is the Remainins of a Cargo of wood that was Imported by the Same merchant as the first & for which he sold out at 15 Cts Some of the logs not so good as some of yours I have no doubt you will be pleased when I send the bill of Lading I will send Numbers Measurement bill [etc]

I have not got the bill yet & of course dont know what it will be Should want more on any particular kind let me know & I will look out for it at leisure.

I dont know when Mahogany has been so Scarce in Merchants hands as at present.

Mr. W. Cowling

From your Obt. St. In haste

Isaac Cross<sup>27</sup>

Typically the letters mention the sale of mahogany at auction, and the sawing of mahogany logs into boards or veneers. A letter of 27 May 1820 from Isaac Cross of New York City describes the measuring of mahogany logs and the use of catalogues at auctions.<sup>28</sup> New York being a major port was able to provide a greater quantity and selection of goods such as mahogany. Other letters document the use of maple as seen in the following excerpt from Cross's letter of 20 January 1820. While maple is found in the South and there are pieces of southern furniture made out of local maple, the wood is more commonly found in northeastern United States.

As to Maple Posts [or] any Post they are an article that, Can be furnished much better At some seasons than others

At the present Season of the year there is no way to get plain or Curled Maple Except from the Lumberyards whereas In the Summer Season we have Men from the Country coming Round with Posts turned both Plain & Curled & Can make generally better Bargains with them than any other persons<sup>29</sup>

In 1820, Cowling purchased from the estate of Richmond merchant,<sup>30</sup> Charles Whitlock \$173.68 worth of furniture hardware.<sup>31</sup> The merchandise purchased consisted of such items as brass bed castors, commode knobs, brass desk locks, and claw castors. An account booklet in box 1 of the Cowling papers shows that he bought furniture hardware for the period March to December 1827<sup>32</sup> from

Richmond merchant Robert Johnson.<sup>33</sup> In 1829 Johnson sued the executors of Cowling's estate for furniture hardware purchased from him for the period January to August 1828.<sup>34</sup> Cowling purchased hardware from New York as well as from local merchants. Isaac Cross sent Cowling ferrils, bed joints, and lion's paw casters. The term "ferril" or ferrule is described as "a ring or cap usually of metal put around the end of a post, cane or the like to prevent splitting." Cowling would have used these on the bottom of a turned leg, the turned foot of a desk or chest of drawers. Cowling purchased from John Dolan brass knobs, bureau locks, lion's paw casters, and four different patterns for knobs. The following excerpt from Isaac Cross' letter of 1 January 1820<sup>35</sup> is an example of furniture hardware purchased by Cowling from New York.

New York 1st Jany 1820

Sir,

On Saturday I rec' the bill of the last lott of Mahogany bought for you & Shipped by the Angen [?] The ferrils you wrote for so long Since is Shipped at last but was not Finished until Saturday. I can allways buy ferrils without trouble but they are Imported & Lacquered those Sent to you are made here & not Lacquered. the cause of keeping you so long out of them was the maker of them makes patent grates & I could not get them before Should you want more you Can have as many as you want either Imported or made here

. . . Should you want more ferrils at any time let me know which you like Lackquerd or not those not Lackquerd Can be Rubbed off the best if they Stand any time unsold.

Letters and accounts from the Cowling papers document that he was able to offer his customers upholstered furniture. There is no evidence that Cowling was trained as an upholsterer, and he may have subcontracted this work out. In 1816, William Ritter, a Richmond city upholsterer, advertised that he could "be found at Mr. Robert Poore's, or Mr. Willis Cowling's, Cabinet-Makers, 13th street."<sup>36</sup> He purchased from Isaac Cross of New York the following materials: curled hair, springs, and hair cloth (a bill of lading from Cross to

Cowling is presented in *figure 5*). From John Dolan Cowling purchased webbing and hair cloth. The following excerpt from John Dolan's letter of 19 January 1826 provides an example of the upholstery materials available to Cowling in New York.

I have no 24 in hair Cloth but but I sent you 26 in in the place of 24 in In March next I expect a large assortmt of hair Cloth & Webbing when it arrives I will send the Cloth that you now order. I have sent to England For some Figd. Cloth so that I am in hopes that I will be able to Keep a Supply of it.<sup>37</sup>

Cowling's papers cast an entrepreneurial light on cabinetmakers' activities during this period. While Isaac Cross consistently appeared on the New York city directories as a cabinetmaker, his purchase of furniture materials for Cowling seems characteristic of a merchant. In the case of New York cabinetmaker John T. Dolan, he is listed in the New York City directory in 1816 as a hardware merchant.<sup>38</sup> Cowling had Virginia coal and tobacco sold in New York, and the evidence suggests that he served as middleman to rural Virginia cabinetmakers, supplying them with imported goods and materials. The business activities of Cowling and his New York colleagues exemplify how cabinetmakers moved from artisan to merchant (which is mentioned by Charles Montgomery in his book, *American Furniture: The Federal Period* 39).

As previously mentioned, Cowling's papers document the shipping of raw materials from northern cabinetmakers and merchants to the South. A similar situation has been documented by Kathleen Catalano for Philadelphia cabinetmakers for the period 1820–1840.<sup>40</sup> Jason Busch in his thesis on furniture patronage in antebellum Natchez has documented the shipping of furniture parts from Pittsburgh and New York to Natchez.<sup>41</sup> The shipment of pre-made furniture parts from New York and Newark, New Jersey, to southern cabinetmakers is a logical extension of the trade in raw materials and other supplies. Letters to Cowling document the practice of buying parts of furniture that were already finished. Isaac Cross of New York sent Cowling turned posts, presumably to be used for bed posts.<sup>42</sup>

W C



SHIPPED in good order and well-conditioned, by Isaac Cross  
on board the Schooner called the Native  
from New York and bound for Richmond - To say:  
Sold by Pasto & D'Urbino, 11 Water-st.

Sixteen bags Mahogany

being marked and numbered as in the margin, and are to be delivered in the like order  
and condition, at the port of ~~Newark~~ <sup>Richmond</sup> (the dangers of the seas  
only accepted unto ~~Willis Cowling~~ <sup>to Mr. Clark,</sup> who  
has long been paying freight for the said ~~Newark~~ <sup>New Jersey</sup> Sea Chests or Cases  
not as per ~~price~~ <sup>rate</sup> in the  
with ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> premium and average accustomed. In witness whereof, the  
master or factor of the said vessel hath affixed to these Bills of Lading, all of  
this twelfth day of September, one of which being accomplished, the other to stand void.  
Dated in New York the 28<sup>th</sup> day of September 1820  
Isaac Cross

5. Bill of lading from Isaac Cross to Willis Cowling, 1820, City of Richmond, Willis Cowling Papers, Box 3, Folder 28 September 1820. Courtesy of Local Records Collection, Archives Research Services, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.

Latham Clark of Newark, New Jersey sent Cowling sideboard feet, scrolled feet, and arms for sofas.<sup>43</sup> Michael Walsh of New York shipped Cowling paws for bureaus and sideboards, pillars and paws for tables, and paws and wings for sofas.<sup>44</sup> At least one other Richmond cabinetmaker was also engaged in purchasing pre-finished items. John T. Dolan's letter of 24 June 1825 to Cowling mentions sending carved work to Robert Poore (an example of carved work attributed to Poore is presented in figures 6, 6a, and 6b).<sup>45</sup>

These pre-finished parts and carving raise some important questions. Why did Cowling not have this work done in Richmond? Were Richmond craftsmen not able to do the work at a cheaper price? Also large cities like New York were capable of supporting craft specialization such as carvers, upholsterers, turners, etc.<sup>46</sup> Zeno, in her thesis on Richmond furniture, states that New York furniture was the standard by which other furniture was judged. Thus, a sense of style may have been a cause for importing pre-made parts from New



6. Card Table attributed to Robert Poore, 1832. Mahogany and mahogany veneer. HOA 29 $\frac{3}{8}$ ", WOA 36", DOA 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Richmond, Virginia. *Courtesy of Jane Southall Bowles; photograph courtesy of Sumpter Priddy III, Inc.*

York.<sup>47</sup> In 1817, Samuel Mordecai of Richmond wrote the following to his sister, Rachel, concerning the purchase of furniture from Richmond for their brother Moses in Raleigh, North Carolina, "My advice would be to obtain them from New York, where they would be obtained better and cheaper, with certainty of conveyance."<sup>48</sup>

In the area of provenance there are also questions to be answered. If the turning and carving on some of Cowling's work was from New York, might not his work be erroneously attributed to a New York cabinetmaker? Cowling's involvement in the intercoastal furniture trade consisted of buying pre-made parts of furniture. There is no evidence in his papers that he retailed northern-made furniture in Richmond.

Were Cowling's dealings with New York merchants and cabinetmakers typical of Richmond and Virginia? Answers to this question are found in the Cowling Papers. Letters from Isaac Cross and John T. Dolan document that veneers and carved work were sent to Rich-



6a. Detail of leg and foot carving on card table attributed to Robert Poore.  
*Courtesy of Jane Southall Bowles;*  
*photograph courtesy of Stumpf Priddy*  
*III, Inc.*

mond cabinetmaker Robert Poore.<sup>49</sup> In his letter of 8 December 1821, Isaac Cross mentions that Richmond cabinetmaker George Hendree<sup>50</sup> purchased veneers from him and wood from mahogany yard owner Jean Marie Joseph Labatut.<sup>51</sup> On 16 July 1826 George Hendree wrote Cowling from New York asking if he wanted him to buy mahogany for him.<sup>52</sup> Isaac Cross in his letter of 6 August 1822 mentioned William Ritter, a Richmond upholsterer being in New York. In the same letter Cross stated that D. H. Sumner of Suffolk, Virginia, on Cowling's recommendation, had purchased material from him.<sup>53</sup> The following letter from John T. Dolan documents his connection with the firms of Potts & Sully and Winston & Duiguid. In June of 1818 cabinetmaker, Chester Sully, and J. Potts opened a lumberyard in Richmond.<sup>54</sup> Winston & Duiguid were cabinetmakers in Lynchburg, Virginia.<sup>55</sup>

Mr. Cowling will confer a particular favor on John T. Dolan by inquiring of Mr. Mayo for the Papers connected with my suit against Potts & Sully so that I may sue one of the Firm now in this City. I believe Mr. Mayo holds the Note that I had against them. Mr. C. Will further oblige me by ascertaining how my demand against Winston & Duiguid of Lynchburgh stands at present I sent the act above 2 years since to J.D. Urquhart Esqr. for Collection it is upwards of a year since he informed me that he got judgment against them & expected to place the Nt proceeds to my Cr. in the Bank subjecto my Dft. since then I have not heard from him. I would be willing to make some sacrifice to have the business settled.

Mr. Cowlings attention to this business will much oblige his obt. Servt.

John T. Dolan  
New York 9th May 1825<sup>56</sup>



6b. Profile of foot on card table attributed to Robert Poore. *Courtesy of Jane Southall Bowles; photograph courtesy of Sumpter Priddy III, Inc.*

It is interesting to note that Lynchburg cabinetmaker Samuel Duiguid's account book has an entry dated 27 May 1825 for a trip to New York.<sup>57</sup> Cowling's dealings with New York merchants and cabinetmakers was not unusual for the more successful cabinetmaking shops in Richmond and other areas of Virginia.

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS WITH  
VIRGINIA CABINETMAKERS

New York merchants and cabinetmakers supplied Cowling with wood, furniture hardware, and upholstery material. Cowling, in turn, provided a similar service for cabinetmakers in Virginia. The Lynchburg firm of Winston & Duiguid requested two gallons of varnish from Cowling.<sup>58</sup> Lynchburg cabinetmaker James Frazier purchased mahogany from Cowling.<sup>59</sup> William Sumner, probably of the Suffolk cabinetmaking firm of Copeland & Sumner,<sup>60</sup> requested mahogany for tables and hair cloth for sofas.<sup>61</sup> W. J. Darden of Smithfield asked

Cowling for hair cloth<sup>62</sup> and moss to stuff an easy chair.<sup>63</sup> The following letter of Shelby Johnson of Halifax Courthouse, Virginia provides a vivid description of the range of goods Cowling was called on to provide for cabinetmakers in the towns and countryside of Virginia.

Halifax C. House September 28 1822

Dear Sir,

I hope you will excuse me for not wrighting to you Before now when I was in richmond I told you I could get you some Beeas wax and wood send it to you by the first opportunity I engagued 200 weight of a north Carolina man in which he was to Deliver in sixty days and he is not done it yet and that is the Cause I have not snt you your money. Though I have not give out looking for the wax yet as he is a respectable man if it comes I will send it to your care and you can keep as much of it as you want and sell the Balance For me the Price of it is 30 cts per pound.

Sir I inclose to you twenty dollars Virginia money which I wont you to pay your self out of the money I sent you to send me abut \$20. worth of mahogany I wont one peace of 2 inch Sandamigo Suitable for side-board legs and I wont you to send me some of your hansomeist venears for Beaureau Fronts [?] them to cut in two lengths and I wont you to send me one plank of sandamigo  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick and one [?] Bay wood and one inch plank of sandamigo and some hansom Banding and I wont you to send me two of carved stump feet to imitation of a lions foot.

Sir I have engaged to do the work that these things cals for in a short time and you will oblige me By sending them the Balance in Which I shal ow you after you send me these things you will make out your account and send it by the former Mr. Hitson and if the wax does not come in a weak or two I will send you the money - I wood of sent more money Now But not nowing the waggon was a going to start but a hour Before hand as times is hard I hope your charge will be modderate for these articcles. I want you to pack them up securely as they are apt to get ingured

Sir I Remain with due Respect your most obedient Friend  
Shelby Johnson

Sir I expect to be in Richmond in four or five weaks<sup>64</sup>

Because of the scarcity of American furniture price lists, especially southern ones, the discovery of the Cowling price lists is significant. One of the lists is dated 1822, and the other two lists are undated (see Appendix I, II and III). The three lists provide the price paid journeymen for making a specific furniture form. All three lists are similar in format: they list the type of furniture, its base price, followed by the same form with extra features, and the cost. The lists for Appendix II and Appendix III show an original price and a revised price for certain items. The two undated lists are a list of prices paid by Robert Poore and Willis Cowling "for Journey work." The fact that both Cowilng's and Poore's names appear on the price list probably indicates more of a friendly working relationship than a partnership. However, the fact that James Thurston sued Cowling and Poore together in 1826 may indicate that they had, by that time, formed some sort of partnership.<sup>65</sup> The need for established price lists may indicate labor problems between master cabinetmakers and journeymen in Richmond. The description of the furniture on these price lists shows that Cowling and Poore were producing furniture in the Empire style. The listing of furniture forms such as Grecian couches, sofas, and easy chairs indicate that Cowling either had an upholsterer in his shop or was contracting his work out to an upholsterer.

## CONCLUSION

The Cowling papers are significant for students of the southern decorative arts for several reasons. First, they contain one of the few known southern price lists. The items listed indicate that Richmond was aware of the current Empire style of furniture found in New York and other major east coast cities. The upholstered furniture on the list indicates that Cowling had access to an upholsterer. This fact and the numerous references in the Cowling papers to veneers and carved furniture parts reflect the specialization in the furniture mak-

ing that had occurred in cities in early-nineteenth-century America.

Second, the papers show the interaction between urban and rural cabinetmakers in early nineteenth century Virginia. New York cabinetmakers/merchants Isaac Cross and John Dolan supplied Cowling with raw materials and pre-made furniture parts. Cowling in turn assumed the role of cabinetmaker/merchant in providing the same goods to his fellow cabinetmakers in the interior of Virginia.

Third, the papers provide documentation of a cabinetmaker's entrepreneurial activities. Through his New York connections such as Isaac Cross, Cowling sold Virginia coal and tobacco. Cabinetmakers who could financially manage it engaged in entrepreneurial activities to further increase their capital.<sup>65</sup> Eighteenth century Charleston cabinetmaker, Thomas Elfe, increased his income by owning rental property and a plantation.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, the papers concern southern cabinetmakers and northern furniture. In the nineteenth century southern cabinetmakers were having to compete with northern imports. Some southern cabinetmakers became retailers of northern furniture while others moved to towns further inland to escape this competition.<sup>67</sup> Cowling seemed to have taken a middle of the road approach. He continued to operate his cabinetmaking shop, but imported raw materials and pre-made parts from the North. Thus regional stylistic features that existed in Richmond furniture would begin to give way to the national Empire style in furniture.<sup>68</sup> In conclusion it is hoped that this article will encourage others to further research the points mentioned above as well as identify furniture by Cowling and other early-nineteenth-century Richmond furnituremakers.

J. CHRISTIAN KOLBE is the Senior Research Archivist at The Library of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia.

## APPENDIX I

A list of prices paid by Robert Poore and Willis Cowling for Journey work as follows:

French Sideboard 6 feet 2 I LONG four readed collums backboard to corresponde with the Front	40.00
Plane Straight front ditto 4 door Back bord	25.00
Extra for them when the legs are readed	3.00
Small Ditto three doors	6.00
Extra for cases on the tops	4.00
Plane secretary desk	8.00
Ditto when Pannill end Extra	2.00
Ditto Do. When with collums & collums & legs readed	24.00
Plane Bureau 3F 9I long 3F 9I high solid ends	10.00
Extra for 2 small drawers in the upper part	1.50
Small Bureau	8.00
all desks & Bureaus to be cockbeaded	
Chinea doore Bookcase	12.00
Plane Ditto	9.00
French Wardrobe	20.00
Doo , with shelves only	12.00
Double wardrobe 3 drawrs below pannel doors & 4 Trays	25.00
Bedstead of all Highpost	3.00
circular washstand	4.00
Extra for stracher	.50
Square ditto common sise	2.00
Extra for Backboard	1.00
Candle stand	2.50
4 feet 6 Inch Dining table ss	14.00
Ends 4F 6I to ditto \$4.50 each	
4 feet Ditto 4s Ends to do 4s	12.00
Tea Table 1 Drawr	14.00
deduct for draw	.75
Pillar & claw Tea Do, Single pilar	10.00
Ditto Extra for 4 Pillars	
card tables the same price	3.00
Plane card tables	12.00
Double case chine press.	18.00
Plane china Doo 4 doors for [?]	25.00
Grecian couches	18.00

Plane sofas	12.00
Easy chairs	4.00
Price for Reading Table legs 1/-	
Do for Reading stand chair 1/-	—
Do for Sidebord collum 1/6	—
Do Do Stump Foot 9/ <sup>4</sup>	—
Do. Front of Side board leg 1/ [on the outside wrapper]	
Pannel and Bureau with half Column Reeded	\$13.50
Grecian Couch half back Twisted Reed Front & Back	30-
Column front Sideboard with 2 Columens & cases	
Twisted Reed	35.00

#### APPENDIX II

Richmond Oct. 10th 1822

Sideboards 6 Feet 3 Long 4 columns 4 doors with plinth readed collums 25	\$30.00
Ditto 6 Feet Long 4 doors 2 Columns & plinth 16	20.00
Ditto 5 Feet Long 3 Doors & 2 draws	
Readed half collum 12	15.00
Ditto plane without collums to	14.00
Single pillar & claw dining table 4 Feet 6 long with [leaves] to the End claws Readed	30.00
Extra For reading the Tops	2.00
Ditto for the same Kind without [leaves] to the End	25.00
Ditto Tea table Claw 8-	10.00
Ditto card tables [?] 16	20.00
Plain Card tables 10	12.00
Plain Tea tables with 1 draw	4.00
Deduct For a draw when none is made	.75
Dining Tables 4F 6l plane 13.50	14.00
Do. D. 4 Feet Do.	12.00
Single Dining table 4F 6l plane	5.00
End 4.6 4.00	4.50
Single Do. 4 plane	4.00
Ends the Same	4.00
[Wing] wardrobe with 4 doors 3 draw & trays - door veneered & a Plane cornice	30.00
French wardrobe with draws 18 and trays	20.00

Ditto with Shelvs only	\$12.00
Large double case wardrobe with 3 draws in the lower case and Trays in the upper 20	22.00
Large China press For Side board 4 doors 20	25.00
Book case sash doors 10	12.00
Do. Without 8	9.00
Plain Secretary panel Ends 16	18.00
ditto with collums 18	20.00
Extra for 2 Top draws 1.50	2.00
Bureaus with 4 draws Sollid end 7	8.00
Ditto Panil 8	10.00
Ditto collems 10	12.00
Ditto with collims & 2 draws on 12 the top	13.50
it is understood the Feet & collums are to be readed if required	
Circular washstand with drawr 3.50	4.00
square Ditto with a drawr 1.50	2.00
extra for Back board 75	1.00
candlestand 2.00	2.50
common china press with in 18 2 cases	20.00
Grecian couch half back read	30.00
do. Couch Back read & front 15	18.00
Readed or Venered	
Square Sophas 4 legs in front 10	12.00
Easy chairs	4.00
Reading table legs 9/-	16
do stand Claws 9/-	16
sideboard - collms when in One Extra collem 1/6 2	25
stump feet 9/ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	12 1/2
Front of sideboard legs 9/-	16
High post bedstead of all Kinds	3.00
French Do.	2.00
Trunnel Do. 1.80	2.00

It is to be understood that all work is to be done in the best manner in point of workmanship and I am willing to pay the prices specified on this bill for one year and if terms should call for an alteration either for the better or worse then to be [altered]

W. Cowling

## APPENDIX III

A list of prices paid by Robert Poore and Willis Cowling for Journey work as follows:

French Side boards 6 feet 2 inches Long	\$30.00
four readed Collums back bound to correspond with the front	
Column front Side boards with two collums and Cases Twisted Read	25.00
Plane front ditto 4 doors backboard	20.00
extra for them when the Legs are Readed	3.00
Small ditto with Three doors "	14.00
extra for cases on he Tops "	4.00
Plane Secretary Desk	18.00
ditto when extra pannel Ends	2.00
ditto ditto when with Collums	
Collums and Legs readed & 2 small draws	24.00
Pannel end Bureau with half	12.00
Column readed with 2 small draws	13.00
cases on the top extra	3.00
Plane Bureau 3 ft 9 in Long 3 ft 3 in high Plain Panill Ends	10.00
extra for 2 Small draws in the	
upper part	[torn]
Small Bureau	8.00
all desks and Bureau's are to be cock beaded	
China Door Book Cases "	12.00
plane ditto Do.	9.00
French Wardrobe	20.00
Ditto with Shelves only 12.00	15.00
double Wardrobes 3 draws below	
Pannel doors & 4 Trays	22.00
Bed Steads of all high posts	3.00
Circular wash Stands	4.00
extra for Stracher	.50
Square ditto Common Size	2.00
extra for Back Board	1.00
Candle Stand	2.50
4 feet 6 Inch dining tables \$5.00	
End 4 ft 6 in. do. @ 4.50ea	14.00
4 feet Ditto \$4.00 Ends to Ditto @ \$4.00 Ea	12.00
Tea Table with one drawer	4.00
deduct for drawer 4/6	" .75
Pillar & Claw Tea ditto Single Pillar	10.00
ditto extra for four Pillars	5.00
Card Tables the Same price	

Plane Card Tables	12.00
Double Case China Press	18.00
Plane China Ditto 4 Doors for	25.00
Grecian Couch half Back Twisted	18.00
Read front & Back	
do. couches	
plane Sofas	1[?]
Easay Chairs	4.00
price for reading Table Legs 1/-	
Do. Do. Reading Stand Chair 1/-	17
Do. Do. Seide board Column 1/6	17
Do. D. Stump foot [9"]	25
12 1/2	
Do. Front of side board legs 1/-	17

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54. Ronald L. Hurst. "Cabinetmakers and Related Tradesmen in Norfolk, Virginia: 1770–1820." M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1989: 138–44. Richmond City, Hustings Court, Suit Papers, April 1819. *Bulloch vs. Potts & Sully*, David Bulloch sues Potts & Sully for rent of a warehouse. Judgment executed on twenty-one gilt framed looking glasses, nine Dutch looking glasses, forty-three mahogany framed looking glass, one brass top stove, and two perel[j]ill iron stove.

55. Rosa F. Yancey. *Lynchburg and Its Neighbors*. Richmond: J.W. Fergusson & Son, 1935: 300.

56. John T. Dolan to Willis Cowling, 9 May 1825, CP, LVA.

57. Diuguid's Burial Records, Diuguid Furniture Co. (1820–1830) Accession 132402b, Cash Account entry for 27 May 1825, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia.

58. Winston & Diuguid to Willis Cowling, 27 October 1818, CP, LVA.

59. Information on James Frazier from the MESDA Research Files provided to the author by Martha W. Rowe, MESDA Research Associate, 20 February 1991. Purchase of mahogany from Cowling found in William Bird to Willis Cowling, 18 October 1821, CP, LVA.

60. U.S. 1820 Industrial Census For Virginia. Nansemond County, 211.

61. William Sumner to Willis Cowling, 29 July 1825, CP, LVA.

62. W.J. Darden to Willis Cowling, 31 May 1821, CP, LVA.

63. W.J. Darden to Willis Cowling, 2 June 1821, CP, LVA.

64. Shelby Johnson to Willis Cowling, 28 September 1822, CP, LVA.

65. Richmond City, Hustings Court, Suit Papers, 13 Dec. 1826, Thurston vs. Poore & Cowling. Robert Poore, Willis Cowling bound to James Thurston for \$1,122.16. Judgment against Poore & Cowling amounting to \$581.81. Following property seized: five sideboards, five hair sofas, six bureaus, three sets dining tables, one pair of black horses and one Negro Julian. 66. Montgomery, 13.

67. John Christian Kolbe. "Thomas Elfe, Eighteenth Century Charleston Cabinetmaker." M.A. Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1980: 58–66, 87.

68. Jonathan Prown. "A Cultural Analysis of Furniture-making in Petersburg, Virginia, 1760–1820." *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1 (May 1992): 2, 82–83, 85, 87–88, 104, 110–11, 113. Ronald L. Hurst and Jonathan Prown. *Southern Furniture 1680–1830: The Colonial Williamsburg Collection*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997: 483.

69. Hurst and Prown, 162–65, 487–89.



## Book Review

Carl R. Lounsbury, *From Statehouse to Courthouse: An Architectural History of South Carolina's Colonial Capitol and Charleston County Courthouse*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press. Pp. x, 113, 60 b/w photos, 21 drawings and maps. Index. Cloth, \$19.95. ISBN 1-57003-378-1.

Carl Lounsbury's book is an apology for the recently completed restoration of the Charleston County Courthouse. It is an apology in the classical sense of the being a reasoned defense of a position. The spectacular restoration of the building, reopened to the public in July 2001, is nothing to be sorry about. But these days any thoroughgoing renovation of a significant historical structure needs to be justified—always to preservationists, frequently to the general public.

In September of 1989 hurricane Hugo hit Charleston head on, devastating the city. The storm did significant damage to the county courthouse—the subject of the book under consideration—blowing off a large portion of its roof and letting the rain pour in, ruining many of the offices and courtrooms. The building was useless after the hurricane, and county court functions were moved to a 'temporary' location in the adjoining municipality of North Charleston. At this writing that is where they mostly remain, more than twelve years later.

In May of 1990 a recently formed group, the Friends of the Charleston County Courthouse, with the help of a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, held a symposium in Charleston on the past and the hoped-for future of the courthouse. Carl Lounsbury was one of the speakers at that conference. In Janu-

ary of 1991 the preservation architects John Milner Associates, of West Chester, Pennsylvania, presented their historic structure report on the courthouse to the local Charleston architectural firm of Lollolio Associates, which had been retained by the Charleston County Council as consultants and architects for the courthouse. The recommendation of this report was that the existing form of the courthouse be retained. This included an addition, as large as the original building, which had been put on its rear, or northern, side, in 1941. Concern for the future of the courthouse led the Historic Charleston Foundation to invite a team of preservationists and architectural historians, including Lounsbury, his colleagues at Colonial Williamsburg, Willie Graham and Mark Wenger, and W. Brown Morton III of the Center for Historic Preservation at Mary Washington College to come back to Charleston in June of 1991 for the purpose of examining the wrecked courthouse to see what evidence survived of its earlier form. After two hundred years of service as the county courthouse, the building had been changed so many times that there seemed to be little in the way of original fabric that would give clues to its original appearance. Appearances are frequently deceiving, however, and as a result of the architectural investigations carried out by this army of Virginians a counter proposal was conceived to restore the courthouse to its late eighteenth-century form. In August, 1991 Lounsbury & Co. submitted their recommendations to the Charleston County Council. The battle over the restoration of the Charleston courthouse was about to be joined.

Jonathan Poston of Historic Charleston Foundation writes in the Foreword of this book that “[f]urther information discovered by Lounsbury, with the assistance of staff members and interns of Historic Charleston Foundation, has yielded the background for a full architectural and social history of the Charleston statehouse and courthouse” (*ix*). The implication is that this book contains that history. This is not true. What Lounsbury has written is the results of a thorough, painstaking, and admirable examination of the surviving

fabric of one of the most important eighteenth-century buildings in Charleston. This is an examination carried out by people who knew what it was that they were looking at and looking for. Lounsbury himself characterizes his book as a "concise architectural history" of "perhaps the most ambitious civic structure erected in the American colonies in the eighteenth century" (1).

He begins with the laying of the cornerstone of the new colonial statehouse in 1753. The South Carolina Assembly had actually passed the act approving the construction of the building in June of 1751, and it is revealing that Lounsbury does not begin with this act. Throughout the book there is a relentless concentration on the physical fabric of the courthouse. Documentary evidence is used generously to interpret the use and meaning of the various spaces within the building, but Lounsbury's main goal is to recover, as much as possible, the actual spaces themselves.

He and his colleagues were able to do this because of hurricane Hugo. They had the singular opportunity, in the early 1990s, of being able to go into a wrecked historic structure and tear away the accumulated fabric to discover what survived underneath the shabby and shoddy twentieth-century surfaces. As the whole building was gutted, more and more of the original structure was revealed.

The structure of the book is straightforwardly chronological, with four chapters addressing the building at its most significant points. The first chapter deals with the eighteenth-century statehouse from its inception in 1753 to the devastating fire of 1788. The second chapter covers the rebuilding of the building from 1788 to 1792 and its transformation into the Charleston district (later county) courthouse. The third chapter is about the thoroughgoing transformation of the building into a Victorian courthouse in 1883. The final chapter examines the rebuilding of the structure after the great Charleston earthquake of 1886 and the subsequent motley twentieth-century accretions. Finally there is a brief conclusion, which is in many ways simply a continuation of the foreword.

Chapter One, "The Statehouse," is the longest since it sets the

stage. The provinciality of Charleston is emphasized, though it is also characterized as the grandest town in British North America. Lounsbury convincingly locates the new statehouse within the architectural context of English provincial public buildings: courthouses, town, shire, and guild halls, etc. He considers the problem of architectural authorship of the statehouse. Because of the complete lack of documents relating to the construction of the building, Lounsbury concludes that “[i]t is more than likely that the actual design decisions emerged from the deliberation of a special building commission” (23). His reasoning, that some of the influential and well-known men who made up the board of commissioners of the statehouse are known to have had some experience with building, is not particularly compelling, and it would make this the only significant public building in Charleston not to be designed by an individual.

Lounsbury appears to be of two minds about this first iteration of the statehouse. On the one hand he considers the building to be unexceptional, “a modest, provincial interpretation of metropolitan taste” (27). On the other hand he calls it a “landmark, heralding a more sophisticated application of design ideas in public building . . . an achievement that projected a clear image of the cultural aspirations of the province” (27). The dualism here is, of course, a matter of context—London or the colonies—but one wonders if the men charged with overseeing the statehouse would have willingly seen themselves as quite so provincial as Lounsbury does.

The best part of the first chapter, indeed the best part of the book, is the physical evidence presented. Lounsbury writes about what was discovered in the examination of the building in 1991. Mark Wenger contributes conjectural elevations (26) and Willie Graham plan reconstructions (29). Like all visual representations they convey a level of certainty that is only tempered by a close reading of the text, but they are very helpful in imagining what the building looked like and how it functioned.

Although Charleston is famous for its architecture and city plan there are actually very few serious books about either one. One of

the best of these is Ken Severens's book about Charleston architecture before the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> In its early pages he reproduces an engraving from a colonial £20 note that he claims represents the Charleston statehouse (11). A comparison of this building with Wenger's restored elevation of the statehouse makes it clear, at least to this viewer, that Severens has mistaken the Charleston Exchange of 1767 for the 1750s statehouse. It would have been helpful if Lounsbury had noted this since one of the purposes of any historical study is (or at least ought to be) the correction of earlier published errors. Lounsbury has found physical evidence that the engaged portico on the south, or Broad Street, facade of the statehouse had columns that rested on low bases rather than on a one-story rusticated basement as shown in the banknote engraving.

Other surviving physical remains establish that the interior of the statehouse was divided roughly into thirds by a pair of transverse brick walls running north and south. This evidence, together with remnants and ghosts of the grand staircase that rose to the upper floor at the north wall, has allowed Lounsbury to reconstruct the central portion of the building as a ceremonial circulation core. After this, physical evidence disappears and the subdivisions of interior space are based on a thorough examination of documentary evidence, which allows Lounsbury to locate functions within the building but does not provide any accurate guide to the size or configuration of the individual rooms. Willie Graham's plans are impressive, but suggest a degree of certainty about where rooms actually were and what their shapes were that is, perhaps, not quite warranted.

In February of 1788 the colonial statehouse was gutted by fire. Two years before, the South Carolina legislature had voted to create a new capital city in the geographic center of the state, which technically rendered the statehouse at the corner of Meeting and Broad streets in Charleston superfluous. Lounsbury's second chapter, entitled "The Courthouse, 1788–1883," is about the rebuilding of the statehouse after the 1788 fire and its second life as a county courthouse. In fact, the Lowcountry members of the state assembly for

the most part had been opposed to the creation of the new capital of Columbia and insisted on continuing to view Charleston as the unofficial state capital. They forced the legislature to agree to a costly and cumbersome duplication of state services (offices in both Columbia and Charleston), and many Charlestonians continued to think of and refer to the building, once it had been rebuilt after the fire, as the "statehouse" until well into the nineteenth century.

At the time of the fire the statehouse/courthouse was the largest public building in South Carolina, but it was not large enough to function adequately. The commissioners appointed to oversee its reconstruction decided to put on a third floor to gain additional space. This decision necessitated a significant redesign of the exterior of the building, documentation for which, like the documentation for the construction of the original colonial structure, is almost wholly lacking. Traditionally the name of William Drayton has been associated with the design of the rebuilt courthouse. Drayton was the first judge of the Federal district court for South Carolina and was not identified as the designer of the new courthouse until the 1850s by the Charleston artist Charles Fraser.<sup>2</sup> Lounsbury is not so sure, and is more comfortable assuming that the new building was designed by a committee in a manner very similar to how he suggested the original building was created.

If it was a committee that designed the enlarged courthouse it was a very effective one, for they created an extremely handsome building. There is no question that this was the period in the structure's history when it made the greatest architectural effect in the city. Its footprint remained the same as the statehouse of the 1750s since the exterior brick walls survived the fire and remained solid enough to be reused. The two interior partition walls that divided the building into thirds were also retained. The Broad Street facade continued to be the primary one, enriched with lateral niches and prominent broken string courses and focused on an elaborate and impressive central portico, now raised on a rusticated basement so that it stretched to the top of the third story. Lounsbury once again emphasizes the

mainstream architectural traditions of late eighteenth-century Britain that the design drew from. Whether one accepts his hypothesis of a building committee or not, the location of the newly designed courthouse in the architectural mainstream is hardly surprising, and does not detract from its quality at all. It would, in fact, go a long way towards explaining how a group of amateurs could come up with such a good building.

The interior was modified a little bit, but not extensively. The biggest single change was the redesign of the main staircase to keep in entirely within the middle third of the building. A comparison of Willie Graham's groundplans on pages 29 and 55 quickly and effectively shows how things were reorganized within the courthouse.

Lounsbury's third chapter is somewhat misleadingly entitled "Modernization of the Courthouse, 1883." It deals with the next significant transformation of the building, which occurred soon after the end of Reconstruction and nearly a century after its 1788–1792 rebuilding. This was not so much a modernization of the structure as an attempt to reorganize it in such a way as to turn it into a more recognizable version of a "standard" South Carolina county courthouse. Since the classic South Carolina courthouse had been invented in the early 1820s by Robert Mills and had virtually nothing to do with the form or internal organization of the old Charleston state-house/courthouse, this was an ambitious undertaking.

Before we arrive at this Victorian moment, however, Lounsbury provides us a fascinating glimpse into a proposal that, had it not been rendered nugatory by the outbreak of the Civil War, would have substantially transformed the entire building. This was the proposal, made public in the fall of 1860, to construct a large wing on the back, or north, side of the eighteenth-century courthouse, turning it into a T-shaped building. Its intent was to provide the building with the kinds of judicial spaces that had come to be considered necessary for mid-century South Carolina courthouses but that were impossible to carve out of the building as it stood. Despite being by far the largest courthouse in the state—Robert Mills gives its dimen-

sions as 120 feet by 60 feet—the decision to retain the two interior transverse walls on the first and second stories during the rebuilding of 1788–92 made it impossible to construct courtrooms that were much more than thirty feet square, tiny by the standards of the 1850s. Lounsbury quotes from an article in the *Charleston Mercury* in October of 1860 that makes it sound like work on the addition was about to commence. But already in 1859 the legislature had ceased appropriating money for public building projects, presumably in anticipation of the coming war, so there was no real chance that anything would actually have happened with the courthouse.

It took nearly twenty years after Appomattox for Charleston to get back on its feet, economically and architecturally. In 1883 the Charleston County commissioners approved plans that called for gutting the building and reconstructing it, within its original exterior walls, as essentially an oversized South Carolina county courthouse. Viewed in this light, the Victorian work is understandable, if ultimately unfortunate. Lounsbury does not look at it like this, however, and quotes with approval an anonymous commentator who opined that “whoever shall undertake to ‘improve’ its architecture will do no good to the building and as little to himself” (68).

The radical changes made to the courthouse in 1883–84 were not purely arbitrary, although this is the impression that is given by the book. Willie Graham’s plans of the building after its Victorian transformation (69) look like Robert Mills’ Kershaw county courthouse as it was first designed in 1824–25. Local architect/engineers John Gourdin and Frederick Smith were clearly looking around, rather than ahead, with their redesign of the courthouse.<sup>9</sup> The middle third of the building, given over to circulation since its completion at the end of the 1750s, was absorbed into the practicality of the later nineteenth century. The grand staircase with its hall, which had been the most noticeable feature of the interior of the building, was ripped out. The ground floor was remodeled into a series of offices opening off of a central hallway that now ran from the new primary entrance at the east (Meeting Street) end of the building directly through to

the west, or back side of the structure. Vertical circulation was moved to the Meeting Street end of the building, which meant that as soon as one entered the building through what had until now been a secondary entrance, one was confronted with a stair hall, rather than simply a side entrance into the main building.

The second story was modified as dramatically as the first floor. With the total removal of the north-south transverse brick walls (a feature of the building since its initial construction), and the filling in of the old central stairwell, this upper floor became for the first time a judicial *piano nobile*, with an entrance vestibule to the east, a single courtroom of nearly sixty by seventy feet in the center and a series of court offices behind the courtroom to the west. The third floor now became a series of offices and jury rooms.

All of this was accomplished at the expense of the integrity of the eighteenth-century building. Although the attached portico remained on the south, or Broad Street, facade, the door that had opened into the courthouse there for nearly a hundred years was replaced by a window. An elaborate door surround was placed on the east end of the building, facing Meeting Street, marking the new main entrance to the courthouse. The rest of the exterior was modified as well. The bricks of the ground floor were channeled and covered over with new stucco to create a rusticated effect. The string courses and niches of the 1788–92 courthouse were removed and the windows of the third floor enlarged. Lounsbury's disapproval of all of this is clear. "From civic monument," he writes on page 75, "to functional office, the symbolic significance of the building had been sacrificed on the altar of bureaucratic efficiency." What really happened was that one grand space—the eighteenth-century circulation hall and its staircase—had been replaced by another, the Victorian second-floor courtroom.

Soon after all this work had been accomplished, Charleston suffered one of its greatest natural disasters: the earthquake of August 1886. Like most of the masonry structures on the peninsula, the courthouse was seriously damaged. The west wall of the building

was so badly damaged that it needed a great deal of rebuilding at the second- and third-floor levels. The reconstruction of course matched the recently completed work, but it also obliterated any evidence of the eighteenth-century building on this end. Much more detrimental to the architectural integrity of the courthouse than the earthquake, however, was the treatment the building received throughout the twentieth century. Despite Lounsbury's feeling that the courthouse had been sacrificed to bureaucracy in the 1880s, county government was still relatively restricted and benign at that point. More officials than simply sheriffs and county clerks—school district superintendents and health officers, for example—were starting to be located in courthouses, but the flood of expanding county authority is really a twentieth-century phenomenon.

Charleston alone of South Carolina counties did in the nineteenth century what many of them ended up doing in the twentieth: spinning county offices away from the central courthouse to satellite buildings. When Robert Mills designed the Fireproof Building, officially the County Records Office, across the street from the courthouse, in 1822, it was the first attempt to accommodate district (county) government outside of the courthouse proper. It also provided security against fire for irreplaceable records, something the old building was clearly incapable of. By the 1920s though, the old courthouse was severely squeezed for space. At a time when many other South Carolina counties were tearing down their old courthouses and replacing them with larger modern buildings, Charleston county decided to expand its courthouse at Meeting and Broad streets. For the first time since the aborted project of the 1850s the decision was made to change the footprint of the building.

In 1926 a two-story wing containing offices and a new courtroom was added to the northwest corner of the old building. This expansion into the rear yard of the courthouse destroyed a privy, one of the three surviving eighteenth-century outbuildings on the site. Because this addition of the 1920s only briefly eased the space crunch in the courthouse, Lounsbury does not devote much time to it. Fif-

teen years after it was finished it was necessary to expand the courthouse yet again. In 1941 the local architect David Hyer (not Albert Simons, as is so often assumed) decided to replicate the Meeting Street facade of the existing building as he filled in the remaining space in the crook of the L-shaped footprint created by the 1926 addition, thus creating an architectural doppelgänger effect. Lounsbury thinks that it was “unfortunate” that Hyer “chose to copy the changes that had been made to the building during the 1883 renovations” (83). But what choice did he really have? Hyer did not have access to the building in the same way that Lounsbury & Co. did in the 1990s. He did not know, or, presumably, care, what the building had looked like in 1792. He only had the Victorian iteration to work from. It is legitimate to criticize what he did, but it seems unfair to complain that he did not do what he could not have done.

This significant addition, essentially doubling the space of the eighteenth-century courthouse, was again merely a stopgap measure. Already by the late 1950s it was clear that even the enlarged building was rapidly becoming too small. By the mid-1960s, the nadir of concern for historic structures in this country, the county council was talking about abandoning the courthouse altogether. Preservation-minded Charlestonians petitioned the council not to abandon the old building, and Sam Stoney, a Charleston architect and indefatigable preservationist, created a design that would have doubled again the size of the already doubled courthouse. The result of this agitation was the decision essentially to leave the courthouse alone structurally and build a big new county building just to its north. The courthouse continued to be modified cosmetically however, generally to its detriment. Some modest attempts in 1968–69 to restore lost features are enumerated by Lounsbury, but they were not thorough and are damned by his very faint praise.

By the last couple of decades of the twentieth century the Charleston courthouse was in sorry shape. Very few people thought anymore that it contributed much to the Broad Street cityscape and no one was happy with how it functioned. As mentioned above, the conclu-

sion of Lounsbury's book is really a continuation of the foreword and a justification of the restoration choices that the Charleston county council ultimately made concerning the courthouse. Shakespeare's aphorism "the past is prelude" is fitting here, especially since it comes from his play *The Tempest*, for it was the destruction to the building caused by the tempest named Hugo in 1989 that allowed Lounsbury & Co. to do the research that led to the county council's decision, first of all to restore the building, and secondly to restore it to its period of greatest architectural significance.

The book is lacking its final chapter. A case could be made that its publication should have been delayed until after the courthouse restoration was completed in 2001 so that Lounsbury could have written a celebratory conclusion detailing the spectacular retrieval of the interior spaces and exterior forms of the late eighteenth-century building. The penultimate photograph in the book (90) shows the rear of the courthouse covered with an enormous piece of fabric suspended from the eaves, on which was printed a cartoon version of what was to come. Wrangling over just what form the restoration would take, and who would shoulder the costs (and what costs would be acceptable) took so many years that this advertisement for the building's future was ultimately shredded by wind and rain. No matter; the architectural reality of what was done far surpasses this temporary "façade" and the photograph records what is now just a sentimental moment in the past.

If this were a book of poetry it would probably be described as a 'slim volume.' Its architectural argument is mainly made with words, a fact attested to by the decision not to number the photographs. This makes it impossible to refer to them to illustrate an argument or a point, so they remain always outside the text. Even when they could be useful to make a particular point they are not brought into the argument, which leads one, by the end of the book, to conclude that they mostly serve to fortify the slim text. A more serious criticism of the photographs is that their captions assume a significant familiarity with the Charleston cityscape. That is to say that there are a number of cases where the explanation accompanying the pho-

to fails to identify clearly even what building, of several possible choices, the viewer should be looking at. After a couple of these, the reader could begin to feel that the book might possibly be aimed at a specific audience—of which he (or she) is not a part. This would be an unfortunate conclusion to reach. These captions are probably an inadvertent result of a too great familiarity with Charleston. We all tend to forget that others do not know what we know. This is what editors are for.

It is an editor's job too to catch glaring internal inconsistencies. For example, on pages 50 and 51 there are two reconstruction drawings of the Broad Street entrance to the courthouse, the main one until the 1883 reorientation. Brown Morton's 1991 drawing shows the two windows flanking the door as having round heads. This could have been conjectural but the accompanying caption clearly states that the physical evidence supports the drawing. On the facing page we are given Mark Wenger's undated restored south elevation of the courthouse that shows the same windows with flat heads. Again, this might have been an oversight except that the text unequivocally says that “[t]he two adjoining windows retained their flat-headed openings.” What are we to believe? To this reviewer's eye, the round-headed windows look suspiciously Italianate, rather than neoclassical. And since the courthouse was actually restored with flat-topped windows the authority of the building itself must be taken into account. It would be nice, however, if we could be sure.

A great strength of the book, one already mentioned, is the collection of ground plans and elevations, reconstructed by Mark Wenger and Willie Graham. They do an admirable job of supporting the restoration decisions made for the building, and this, presumably, was their primary task. Many times the accompanying captions note that they are “measured” drawings but in only a couple of cases is a scale included and never are we even given such basic facts as the measurements of the courthouse. For this review it was necessary to turn to Mills' 1826 description of the building to get that information.

Of course these are quibbles; generally inconsequential given the

primary function of the book to legitimate the total restoration of the courthouse. As was frequently pointed out in the *Charleston Post & Courier*, the 13.6 million dollar cost of the work—that comes to something over \$900 a square foot—made it one of the most, if not *the* most, expensive public restorations in the history of the country. Most of this cost was borne by Charleston County, but the private advocacy group Friends of the Charleston County Courthouse also raised about a million dollars that was spent on the interior restoration and furnishings.

Lounsbury's book essentially disregards this interior aspect of the building, but it is one that jumps out at the visitor to the newly reopened courthouse. What historical basis is there for the decisions made regarding the furnishings and decoration of the interiors? Is it possible to argue so thoroughly for an exterior restoration of a building, only to opt out when it comes to finishing the inside? Because the book was written long before the decisions about the courthouse's interiors were taken they could not have made up an important element of its argument.

The interior architecture was largely recreated from a handful of fragments of eighteenth-century details recovered during the gutting and restoration of the courthouse. A panel door frame served as the model for most of the door surrounds and, by way of its molding, of the wainscoting in the interiors. A scrap of gouge work became the basis of the frieze in the big courtroom on the second floor and a number of lintel moldings over important doors. Beyond these surviving bits, the inspiration for other inside details came from period pattern books and from surviving contemporary Charleston interiors. Glenn Keyes, the local restoration architect hired to oversee the finishing of the courthouse's rooms displayed a laudable reticence in downplaying interior finishes where historical evidence was not conclusive.

All of the public rooms of the courthouse recall the late eighteenth-century period of the restoration except for one: the law library at the head of the stairs on the second floor. The choice was made here to recreate the mid-nineteenth-century library in the

nearby home of James Louis Petigru, noted South Carolina lawyer and staunch unionist. This room acknowledges the transformation of uses within the courthouse during the nineteenth century. In 1792 it housed the Register of Mesne Conveyance, but in 1826 it became the library of the South Carolina Law Society, so its present use is, if not purely historically accurate, at least defensible. One suspects that it will serve much more frequently as a venue for receptions than as a working library.

Other furnishings throughout the building reflect the period generally. Research on the history of the building brought to light an order for fifty Windsor chairs, so Windsor chairs provide much of the moveable seating throughout the building. Chandeliers are copies of ones found in Independence Hall and in the U.S. Capitol during the federal period. Carpets are based on late eighteenth-century English examples. The most questionable decision was the one to decorate the walls with photographic reproductions of paintings of notable jurists that were then touched up by an artist with a brush. These will look good in photographs, but standing in front of them they come across as more than a little garish. The authentic nineteenth-century portrait of Petigru in the law library is a visual relief.

Lounsbury's book is a chronicle of the investigative work that led to the restoration decisions made for the Charleston county courthouse. There can be little doubt that without the work of Lounsbury & Co. and without the constant voice of Jonathan Poston of Historic Charleston Foundation these decisions would not have been taken and would not have been stuck to through the twelve years from the wrecking of the building by hurricane Hugo to its triumphant reopening in June of 2001. The courthouse will outlast the book, but that is as it should be. Costa Pleicones, a justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court and a speaker at the reopening ceremonies, remarked there that "lofty concepts demand lofty symbols." This is the way that people used to talk about courthouses, but it has largely gone out of fashion, partly because courthouses of the last fifty years or so have so rarely achieved loftiness, but also because jurists themselves seem to have become embarrassed to speak about

the law in this manner. There is no loftier concept than Law, and there probably is no grander expression anywhere in the nation of the symbolic power of the law than the newly restored Charleston courthouse. Lounsbury is to be commended for helping to make this happen.

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END NOTES

1. Kenneth Severens. *Charleston Antebellum Architecture and Civic Destiny*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988.
2. Charles Fraser. *Reminiscences of Charleston*. Charleston, 1854; 99–100.
3. Robert Mills. *Statistics of South Carolina*. Charleston, 1826: 408.
4. Almost every time that a building designer is identified as an 'engineer' in nineteenth and twentieth-century South Carolina it means that he (it is always a he) is an architect of meager talent.



